BING

Winter 2007

No. 147

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2008 are:

USA and Canada	US $25 per annum
UK	£15 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£16 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
South America / South Africa / Singapore / Japan	£18 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of:
(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

As 2007 comes to a close, and we contemplate with incredulity that it's been thirty years since Bing left us, we can take comfort in the fact that public awareness of him and his accomplishments is far greater today than it was twenty or even ten years ago. This is not by accident, but rather due to the hard work of a great many of our fellow ICC members. While space precludes me from citing specific examples, I'm sure each of us has noticed that a momentum has indeed been growing. We need to maintain this public awareness, sustain it and build on it to ensure that the great legacy Bing Crosby left behind does not fade into the dim recesses of time. The youth of today are our future, and educating them is of prime importance.

Speaking of my fellow ICC members, I want to acknowledge the terrific response I received to the advertisement I placed in the Spring issue of this publication. I now own all of the four elusive LP's I had been searching for, and for that, thanks are due to the kindness and generosity of our members. For those who doubt the effectiveness of placing an advertisement in BING, I can attest to the fact that it really works!

The "official" Bing Crosby website, www.bingcrosby.com made its debut on the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing, October 14th. If you haven't had a chance to check it out, be sure to do so. Mark Brodka, Mary Crosby's husband, put a lot of hard work into making it a fine tribute to our man.

On a sad note, we lament the passing on September 10th of Bing's co-star in *Here Comes The Groom* (1951) and *Just For You* (1952), actress Jane Wyman.

There are some new import label CD's now available that you might wish to consider adding to your Crosby collections. These include the German-produced Bear Family reissue of RCA/Victor's concept album, *How The West Was Won*, the 1959 package tracing America's western civilization through story and song. Bing and Rosemary Clooney head a cast of choirs and folk artists in this ambitious project that met with critical acclaim but not great commercial success when first released. Bear Family did a meticulous job of reproducing the entire set, including the book produced in conjunction with LIFE magazine contained within. I own many of Bear Family's box sets and I never ceased to be amazed at the outstanding quality of sound reproduction they achieve. You've never heard these songs sounding so crisp and clear! See *Keeping Track* in the last issue for further details.

The second CD originates from Japan on the Universal International label titled *Bing Crosby Sings Gershwin*. It contains 15 songs penned by George and Ira, recorded commercially by Bing and spanning the years 1938-56. The song choice is interesting, and while some of the tracks are hard to find on CD, it may not be enough to justify the high price typical of Japanese imports.

Let me close 2007 by wishing all of my fellow ICC members and their families a very Merry Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year.

Greg Van Beek

A major public relations exercise by Bing Crosby Enterprises helped make the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing widely remembered. Many writers and radio presenters highlighted the anniversary and we cover most of these in this edition.

I am so pleased that the Crosby family is following the example of the Presley and Sinatra families and having a major push to keep Bing's name alive. All right, we know that they should have been doing something years ago but better late than never. As Greg has said, Crosby fans have promoted Bing very successfully in the past but the time has come for a professional organisation to join us in our efforts. The ICC will be delighted to help the family in any way we can.

The 6-part BBC Radio series mentioned in the last two issues started on November 2. It's called *The Bing Crosby Trail* and I hope that many of you will have listened to this. It can be heard over the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radio2.

It is a mixed blessing to record that I have not had room for several articles about our man this time and this surely is incredible thirty years after his death. My apologies to those contributors who will have to wait until the next issue.

Ron Bosley has provided the front cover for this issue and Jon Oye has come up with the montage on the back. There's a lot to read so don't delay. As you work your way through the magazine, we shall be into the holiday season which means Bing's voice will be heard all over the place. What could be better?

Happy holidays!

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

The encouraging news as I write my report (October 2007) is, as Greg Van Beek has indicated, that Bing Crosby Enterprises has launched its website, which will promote Bing's unique and seminal contribution to the world of popular music and entertainment. Alongside this, a CDRom outlining Bing's achievements has been widely distributed to the media by Bing Crosby Enterprises in an effort to capitalise on the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing.

This enterprise is long overdue and we wish its founders every success as they strive to remind the world of Bing's gigantic influence over all the popular singers and musicians that came after him.

The release of Bing's Hofstra Papers in book form is imminent and along with the launch of the above web site, the CDRom and the BBC series, we have an encouraging finish to the Crosby year.

NEW MEMBERS

UK

A warm welcome to Mr. G F Stark (Ruislip), Mrs. Lee Andrews (Ramsgate, Kent) and Ms. A Hawkins (Byker, Newcastle). You are amongst friends.

DONATIONS

Our list of generous supporters grows with each issue and we extend our thanks to them in the knowledge that their generosity helps keep the ICC a viable and thriving club.

We salute: -

Gerard Ormesher, Michael Winspear, Jeremy Rose, Bob Halls, Barry Whittingham, Raymond O'Toole, Tom Hughes, Ken Heason, Doreen Hubbard, Jim Byrne and George Patmore.

Further donations will be acknowledged in the spring edition of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of the following:

Sister Delores Crosby (see tribute on the next page), Alan Bone (Rosyth, Fife) and Harold Hanke (Oldbury, West Midlands)

Alan was a life-long Bing admirer and Harold attended regularly at Leeds. We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Alan and Harold.

MEMBERSHIP

Members will recall that in my last report I indicated that subscriptions were likely to rise for 2008 and so it is to be. Wig and I have reviewed the ICC finances and we have concluded that a rise is necessary due to the US dollar/pound exchange rate and increased postal / printing costs. Rates have stayed the same for many years and we have been prompted many times to raise subscriptions but fortunately our benefactors have made it possible to keep the rates stable. The increases were discussed at the Leeds meeting in October and members unanimously supported the proposed rises in subscriptions

Wig and I appreciate that there may be a very limited number of our members who cannot afford the increase. To these members we offer understanding and if they care to write to us we will endeavour to mitigate their fee for at least one year.

We hope that all other members will support our continuing efforts to bring you a first class magazine at a viable rate and to those of you who add a donation to your subscription, we offer our grateful thanks.

Fees for Australia and New Zealand will remain at their present level. New rates are shown on your subscription reminder and on the front inside page of the magazine.

LEEDS 2007/8

Yesterday (October 7th) was our 42nd Leeds dinner/meeting and the general consensus was that this was a very happy and successful meeting. Malcolm excelled with his presentation and I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude to him for all the effort he put into bringing us a smooth, professional and unique film festival of some quite rare Bing moments taken from film and TV. Our thanks also go to Greg Van Beek for providing some exceptional TV show excerpts from his collection.

Members attending for the first time were most encouraging with their praise and all expressed a wish that we will continue with the meeting for the foreseeable future.

John Walton will report more fully on the day's events but meanwhile please note that we will meet once again on the first Sunday of October in 2008.

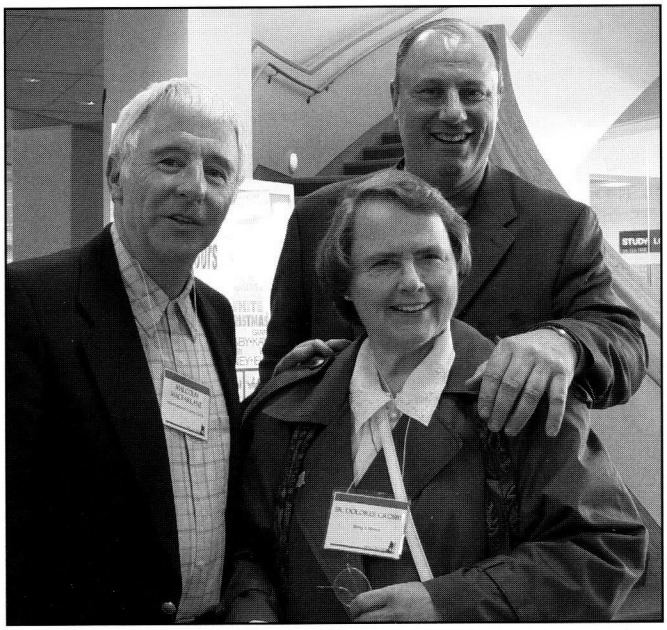
Until spring, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton – October 8, 2007

Sister Delores Crosby, 1934-2007

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Bing's niece, Sister Delores in July. Many of us had the great pleasure of meeting "Dixie," as she was known to the family, at Gonzaga in 2003 and she was a lovely and lively personality. Howard Crosby expressed the thoughts of the Crosby family on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

> "Thanks to all of you here on the board for your kind thoughts. Dixie was certainly one of Bing's favorite nieces, as he very much admired her vocation to the religious life. He was most generous during his lifetime with contributions to the Sisters of the Holy Names.
>
> She liked to call herself "the fun nun", and boy was she ever. Always the life of the party, she like "White Russians" and Bailey's Irish Cream. She celebrated over 50 years since she was ordained just a few years ago. She was about the nicest sister anyone could ever have.
>
> She contracted liver cancer and was diagnosed in late November, and her doctors did not expect her to live through March. She died on July 22nd, after being essentially in a coma for four weeks. But miraculously, she never had ANY PAIN! The nurses at the care center never gave her so much as an aspirin for pain. And she was completely at peace with her fate from the moment of the diagnosis. I believe that this was God's gift for a life well lived in the service of others.
>
> I can assure you that she is greatly missed, and I take comfort in knowing that St. Peter will be hard pressed to deny me admission with Sister Dolores tugging at his sleeve...."
>
> **Howard Crosby**



Sister Delores with Howard Crosby and your editor (left) at Gonzaga in May, 2003

Several newspapers published nice tributes to her in particular the article by Casey McNerthney from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* of July 28 who said:

Sister Crosby, who was the niece of crooner Bing Crosby, entered the Sisters of the Holy Names in 1952. She earned a master's degree in education from Eastern Washington University and in 1956 began as a junior high teacher.

She served as an elementary school principal in Spokane, Edmonds, Tacoma, Seattle and Everett, retiring in 1999 after 30 years.

Sister Crosby loved the Mariners, the Seahawks and McDonald's burgers, but took the most joy from watching students excel in speech competitions. When she left Our Lady of the Lake in 1992 — headed for a principal's job at Immaculate Conception School in Everett—the speech program was considered the best among Catholic grade schools.

Sister Crosby, who is survived by her twin sister and three other siblings, also organized a Mothers Tea, where students sang Eddy Arnold's "That Wonderful Mother of Mine."

"My brother and I made fun of that song," said 1997 Our Lady of the Lake grad Martha Geoghegan. "But we still sing it to our mom on Mother's Day."

Casey McNerthney

Another article by Julie Muhlstein on HeraldNet on August 1st in Everett, Washington contained a nice story:

Mary Hupf, director of religious education at Holy Rosary Church, taught with Crosby in

Edmonds. Crosby - close friends used her nickname, Dixie - lived in a convent at Holy Rosary at the time.

"She'd say that all the nuns went to bed at 8 o'clock. We used to hang out," said Hupf, who'll deliver a eulogy for Crosby at a memorial service at 11 a.m. Saturday at Our Lady of the Lake Church in Seattle.

To prepare for her talk, Hupf contacted Crosby's twin, Katie Ferguson of Richland. "Katie told me that her sister always followed the rules, but she had her own interpretation of the law," Hupf said. "Once, as a novice in the convent, it was her turn to bake cookies. The rule was one cookie per person. Dixie obeyed, but each cookie was the size of a salad plate."

Kathryn Crosby's "Heroes" Cabaret Shows

Kathryn Crosby's popular cabaret returns this Holiday Season with a new show entitled "Heroes," a tribute to Bing's support of the GIs of World War II. If you're in the Iowa or the Minnesota areas, look out for the show.

Saturday, Dec. 1, 2007 — 7:30 pm
PEARSON LAKES ART CENTER
2201 Highway 71
Okoboji, IA 51355

Saturday, Dec. 15 — 2:00 pm
Sunday, Dec. 16 — 1:30 and 7:30pm
HEIGHTS THEATRE
3951 Central Ave. NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Monday, Dec. 17:
THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF MINNEAPOLIS
410 Oak Grove Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Tuesday, Dec. 18:
11:00am lunch program at the club (members only)

Crosby back in competitive swing

Nathaniel Crosby has attracted some newspaper coverage in recent months. This article was by Bill McGrath of Greater Niagara Newspapers on July 26.

LEWISTON— Nathaniel Crosby said it was "time to get out of bed" and back into competitive golf again, and what better place to start than on the course where he enjoyed one of his finest moments.

Crosby is back at Niagara Falls Country Club with his look-alike son, Nathaniel Jr., as his caddy, his first appearance since winning the championship in 1982.

That was the year the 20-year-old Crosby, the son of world famous singer and entertainer Bing Crosby, rallied in the final round of the 24th Porter Cup to win his second major championship in less than a year, overtaking bogey-burdened Bob Lewis Jr. and beating defending champion Jay Sigel by a stroke.

. . . The fact that this is the silver anniversary of that victory had nothing to do with his playing in the tournament.

"The Amateur is at Olympic Club this year, so I thought I'd get out of bed and try to play competitive golf," he said. "This is my first medal play. So I'm trying to give it the college try and try to qualify for the U.S. Amateur this year."

The Olympic Club in San Francisco is where Crosby stunned the golf world by winning the U.S. Amateur in 1981. Despite beating some of the game's best players, he knew there was talk that his victory was a fluke. That was what made his triumph at the Porter Cup so sweet.

"I had to defluke the Amateur," he said, flashing that engaging if not mischievous smile. He ranks his Porter Cup title as neck-and neck with being low amateur in the U.S. Open in 1982. "But the Porter Cup was a gratifying win."

In 1984, he turned pro and earned his card on the European circuit.

"I was ranked 85th in my first year, 105th in my second year and 150th in my third year," he recalled. "As they say on Wall Street, that's negative trending."

With his pro career fading fast, he regained his amateur status a couple years later. For 10 years, he was president of Jack Nicklaus Golf before holding a similar position with California-based Orlimar Golf from 1998 to 2000. Now he is a partner in The Golf Agency, which primarily markets golf real estate.

He said he was disappointed in his round Wednesday. "When things started going bad," he said, "I got scared. I should have gotten tough."

Bill McGrath

Another article by Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer on August 5 contained some interesting comments:

As he reflected on his Amateur victory and his abbreviated pro career, Crosby offered few regrets - except when the conversation turned to the tournament his dad founded. The old Crosby Clambake is now the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, of course, and that still bothers him.

He spoke with AT&T officials in the late 1990s about bringing back the old name in some form, but those talks proved fruitless. Crosby knows many young people today don't even know who Bing Crosby was, and the tournament offers no tangible reminder.

"I'm very disappointed," Nathaniel Crosby said. "My dad's name should be entrenched and attached to that tournament. ... I just think his legacy and his contribution to golf should be re-established at some point."

I'm sure that we all agree with that last sentiment.

Incidentally, Nathaniel ultimately decided not to play in the U.S. Amateur this year.

The President of the Bing Crosby Appreciation Society

Keith Parkinson and Gerard Ormesher sent us copies of an article in the Liverpool Echo of September 8 which was devoted to the career of Peter Murphy also known as Steve Larraby. Subtitled "The man with the best photo album in the city", the article described his many memories of working in and around the celebrity world. He says that he met Bing at Cockermouth when he was there with "his wife Kathy Grant and his family." (N.B. whilst Kathryn was with him at Cockermouth, his family wasn't). Murphy goes on to say "I was invited to become the President of the Bing Crosby Appreciation Society in the North West (of the UK), a title I am proud to have to this day."

Well, we congratulate Mr. Murphy on his appointment which we have occasionally seen mentioned in articles in the Liverpool press over the years but unfortunately he has never been one of our members as far as is known. I wonder if his society has many members?

Member Bert Hamblett noticed the article and wrote to the newspaper concerned pointing out the many inconsistencies in dates and places quoted by Mr. Murphy regarding his show business 'career'. No reply was received.

Sadly, it does appear that Mr. Murphy's imagination has been working overtime and it may have something to do with the tribute act he does to Bing. I suppose it helps him to obtain bookings if he can say that he is the President of the local Bing Crosby Appreciation Society.

White Christmas

Bing's classic song 'White Christmas' has topped polls of all-time feel-good festive tunes in Scotland and in North Carolina.

In Scotland, a survey for the Scottish Executive's mental health programme found the Irving Berlin-penned song was most likely to warm winter hearts.

Slade's romp, 'Merry Christmas Everyone', was in second place and Wizzard's 'I Wish it Could be Christmas Everyday' came third in the WellScotland poll. New festive efforts by groups like Take That failed to register.

The results formed part of an online poll of people's attitudes to the festive period and had a focus on mental health, music and food. Of the 772 Scottish adults who responded, 21% voted for Crosby's classic, 17% opted for Slade's 70s anthem and 16% favoured Wizzard.

A spokesman for WellScotland said: "It's well known that songs can bring back memories of people, places and events and, with the three top songs dating back over 30 years it is clear that people in Scotland enjoy reminiscing about past Christmases by listening to the old classics."

Bing's Christmas songs have made an impact in North Carolina too. Clear Channel Raleigh's Sunny 93.9 FM played Christmas tunes for 55 days straight last year before switching from a "light" format to a bouncier format the day after Christmas. All that holiday spirit is joyous for some, perhaps, but it grates nerves like nutmeg for others. So, in an effort to soothe some of that this holiday season, Curtis Media Group conducted an on-air Christmas music survey recently for its stations. It gave listeners the chance to choose which yuletide jams they do and don't want to hear over the next couple of months. Program director Chris Roth says more than 1,100 listeners participated in the morning test. Of about 70 songs that roughly 1,500 listeners seemed to really care about, they gave the most thumbs up to Bing. Der Bingle's rendition of "White Christmas" was numero uno (no surprise there) and his "Winter Wonderland" and "Do You Hear What I Hear?" also made the top five, along with Andy Williams' "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" and Burl Ives' "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

Guinness World Records 2008

Nice to see that Bing's recording of "White Christmas," released in 1942, is still shown in the latest edition of the famous book as the biggest selling single with at least 50 million copies sold.

Bing's radio shows

Member Jim Reilly recently posed an innocent question. How many radio shows did Bing do? Well, we researched this and rather than waste the information here's the calculation.

Old Gold	66
Presenting Bing Crosby	113
Cremo	102
Music That Satisfies	27
Woodbury	72
Kraft Music Hall	387
AFRS shows - at least	100
Philco	108
Minute Maid	503
Chesterfield	113
GE	75
Guest appearances - approx	297
CBS 15-minute show – approx	550
Ford Road Show – approx	260
Crosby-Clooney shows - approx	697
TOTAL	3470

The last three entries were of course compiled shows and were not shows done in one go by Bing. The same applies to the Minute Maid series Bing did in 1949-50 but nevertheless it's quite a total. And we don't know how many appearances Bing made from the Cocoanut Grove with Gus Arnheim. Perhaps another 200?

In Search Of Perry Como

Ken Crossland and your editor have been continuing their researches for their forthcoming book on Perry Como and inevitably Bing has cropped up in the discussions with various people.

Noted director **Bob Wynn** produced and directed Perry Como's last few TV specials and your editor had not initially realised that Bob had a connection with Bing. However, Bob worked on a number of Bing's TV specials before becoming the producer of the 1961 Xmas show from London. He recalled the special in March 1961 when Maurice Chevalier was the guest and Bob was the Unit Manager. Chevalier had arrived at the studio looking a very old and tired man, which was a great disappointment to Bob. However, once he was performing in front of the cameras, the 'real' Chevalier reappeared and he gave a great performance. After the show, Bing gave Chevalier a wonderful party. Bob recalled that Bing could be a little careful with his money and sometimes a 'party' consisted of some cheese and some cans of beer, but on this occasion, it was top class.

Shirley Bassey talks to her host

Later that year, when Bob was temporarily out of work and struggling to make ends meet with two young children, Bing's agent George Rosenberg called him and invited him to come to London. No mention was made of travel expenses and Bob had to use his credit cards to cover the fare. He went to the Savoy to see Mr. Rosenberg who told him that Bing was planning to go straight home after filming *The Road To Hong Kong* was completed but really they wanted him to headline a TV special to be taped in London. Bob's assignment was to persuade Bing to stay and do the show. He approached Bing who was cordial but did not make any commitment. However, he showed up for rehearsals for the show and then, as we know, completed the assignment. One of the guests was Shirley Bassey. Bob had seen her perform at a nightspot when she looked wonderful. But, as happened with Chevalier, when she arrived for rehearsal, she looked awful with skin and hair problems plus there were difficulties in her private life with a child and a boy-friend. Typically, though, Miss Bassey pulled it all together when it mattered and looked great when the show was taped. Bob said that she was one of his all-time favorites.

Bob was fulsome in his praise of Bing. He said that, "he was the most wonderful human being on Earth" which drew an exclamation from me. Bob said that he knew others did not share his opinion but "Bing was like a father to me – he made me what I am today." He referred to Bing's first family saying that "they were all bad boys" and that "Bing did his best with them."

Dick Williams

Dick is the brother of Andy Williams and was the choral director on Como's last few shows. He and his brothers formed the Williams Brothers act which was so successful in the 1940s. Your editor mentioned Bing to him and he remembered the recording session when "Swinging On A Star" was laid down. Bing was very nice but extremely business-like. He always knew his part – he was a professional. Dick remembered that they sang the song a couple of times and then it was goodbye. It was a great coup for the Williams Brothers' father to work with Bing in this way. Dick laughed as he told me how his father was very pushy and managed to get in to see a top ranking film executive called Mr. Cassidy. Father had difficulty in remembering names and his trick with Mr. Cassidy was to remember "Hopalong" to trigger the name. Typically, when father later introduced the boys to Mr. Cassidy, he called him Mr. Hopalong!

Like his brother Andy, Dick could still remember many of the songs they sang as the Williams Brothers and to prove it he sang his part in "On The Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe". I challenged him to sing "Hello, Hello" and Dick duly did so and was word perfect.

Perry Como

We also stumbled on an interview with Perry done by Pete Martin when Perry was asked about Bing. This is what he had to say.

"Now we're talking about a fine man who's been a great help to me," Como added. "Bing Crosby. The American people carry such an affectionate image of him in their minds that all they really ask of him is that he sing. It doesn't make much difference what it is, just as long as he sings something."

"He's the best interview I've ever had," I [Pete Martin] said. "I always tell people that when they ask me, and I am asked now and then."

"He's wonderful," Como said. "He can also be very distant, but people forget that his work and his family have kept him busy twenty-four hours a day at times—busier than anybody will ever know. He's had a lot on his mind and a lot of worries, and I think he's assumed his hard-to-get-close-to attitude in self-defense. He may be distant and stand-offish with people who waste his time or who are trying to get something out of him, but he's surely had a long, long love affair going with the public, and that's what really counts."

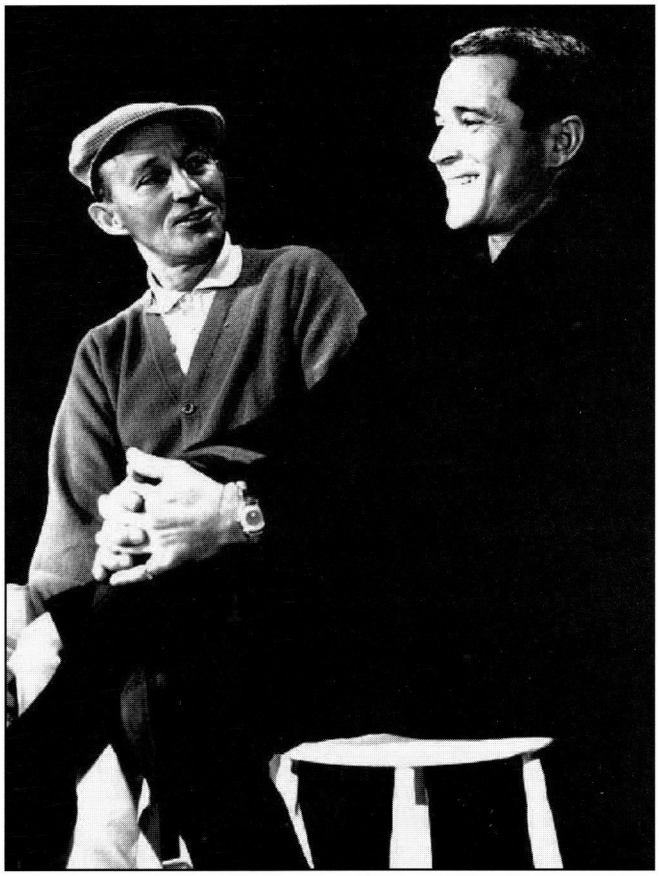
Como continued, "All I know is he's always been a nice guy to me; he's always been unfailingly kind. Yet you can go just so far with him. In a sense I'm the same way. You can push me or push any human being just so far, then a line has to be drawn somewhere."

I said, "My theory about Bing is that if you want his friendship, your best bet is to let him make the moves. If you try to make them, if you're pushy or shovy or demanding, he disappears into the mountains and goes fishing."

. . . I said, "The first time Bing Crosby really came over to me on television, I sent him a telegram—I couldn't resist it. When I'd seen him on TV before, he had looked stiff and nervous. Then suddenly one night he had all of his charm and ease of manner. I had to tell him."

Como said, "The first TV show he did disappointed me too. If he had forgotten about putting the rug on his head and about his tux and his black tie and had just walked put there in an old sport shirt, he'd have been himself. Of course, that's only my personal opinion. Later, as you say, he came on one night and all at once he was the insouciant, easy, debonair, rollicking Bing I knew. I don't know what happened to him. I think at first he had a psychological block about live TV, but when he was on our live show last year as my guest, he strolled through his songs as if he were strolling over his favorite golf course. Moreover," Como added appreciatively, "if a rehearsal was called for twelve o'clock, he was there at eleven."

"He's a great boy for promptness," I said. "When 1 worked with him some years ago on his story, *Call Me Lucky*, 1 was told that if I were a few minutes late, he'd be away and gone when I got there. He doesn't wait for people who are sloppy about keeping appointments."



Bing and Perry rehearse for the 1960 Kraft Music Hall.

Como said, "Nick Vanoff, the kid who's producing our shows, was quite excited about getting us two elder statesmen together. My chief writer, Goodie Ace, wrote a lot of funny stuff for us; we did a couple of medleys and we had the French comedienne, Genevieve, on our show. Bing got a bang out of her."

Bing enjoys a little parlez-vousing," I said. "Time was when he was a prize-winning French student at Gonzaga University in Spokane."

"He did give her a little French, come to think of it," Como chuckled. "I asked, 'What's going on here?' and Bing said, 'Oh, I mangle the Gallic a bit.' Bing was fun to work with."

(Perry Como, interviewed by Pete Martin, as set out in the article 'I Call On Perry Como', 1960)

Felisa Vanoff

Nick Vanoff, who Perry mentioned above, was also the man who originated the Hollywood Palace shows and sadly he died in 1991. His widow Felisa still lives in Beverly Hills and your editor had a nice chat with her in September. Mrs. Vanoff appeared in the 'Christmas At The Hollywood Palace' programme put out some years ago. She had nothing but warm memories of Bing and Kathryn. She recalled Bing turning up early for a rehearsal. He always knew his lines and was thoroughly professional. The Hollywood Palace show came about from a 10 minute phone call when Nick Vanoff was asked to put together a show to replace the ailing Jerry

Lewis show. Nick approached Bing at short notice and Bing agreed. Because Bing did the show, others took notice and it became easier to obtain high quality hosts. I said that it was a shame that more of the shows were not available and Mrs. Vanoff seemed to agree. From her guarded reaction, one assumes that legal wrangling may be taking place.

Ray Charles

Your editor had the great privilege of interviewing "the other Ray Charles" in September and after talking about Perry, I got him to speak about working with Bing whilst I videoed him. The video was shown at the Leeds meeting in October. Ray said that Bing always prepared very well and knew his material backwards. This helped him to ad lib more easily. Ray mentioned an occasion when Bing guested on Perry's TV show in 1960 and a late change had to be made to one of the medleys. Bing asked when this was to be rehearsed and Ray replied "It's not." Bing said "Oh, yes it is." The orchestra had to be recalled so that Bing could run through the medley.

Bing obviously believed in the old adage "Fail to prepare and you prepare to fail."

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bing Crosby's Restaurant

Your editor passed through San Francisco on the Como trail in September and naturally he had to make a short detour to Walnut Creek for a meal at Bing's Crosby's Restaurant. We did give a fair amount of publicity to the grand opening of the restaurant in BING #139 but this was my first opportunity to sample it myself.

Walnut Creek appears to be a fairly affluent area and the Restaurant in ideally located with plenty of parking at the rear. Valet parking is available for a $6 fee. At the entrance there is a continuous playing of Bing's songs and a friendly receptionist welcomes you as you enter. I was amused to see an array of various types of hats, similar to those worn on occasion by Bing, on offer for $48 each.

My wife, Pat, and I had made a reservation over the Internet to go in at 6:30 p.m. as I wished to video the restaurant before it became very busy for showing at the Leeds meeting. Pat and I both felt that the restaurant was beautifully and tastefully set out and the many photos of Bing were stunning. Apart from the numerous photos, there were various memorabilia including Bing's Oscar, gold discs, a golf club and sheet music. The food was magnificent and the service supplied by a top class waiter called Eric could not have been bettered anywhere. I had the Bing Crosby Signature Dish, Fillet Mignon, which was excellent, and cost $39 to give you an idea of prices there.

A pianist gently played whilst we were dining but there were very few Bing songs included in her repertoire. We can't have everything!

I wrote to the management to thank them for a splendid evening and to thank them for helping to perpetuate Bing's image for the younger generations.

The company already has another restaurant at Rancho Mirage (Palm Springs area) and they are planning to open others in San Diego & West Palm Beach, Florida next year.

Malcolm Macfarlane

WWW.BINGCROSBY.COM

We mentioned the launch of this excellent new website by Bing Crosby Enterprises on an earlier page and it is now possible to have regular updates from the site. Simply email info@bingcrosby.com a 'sign me up!' note and they will arrange for updates to be sent to you. This will keep you abreast of news items and add you to their ever-growing list of Friends of Bing.

LATE NEWS

Universal Pictures have announced the UK Region 2 DVD release of *W.C. Fields The Movie Collection* on 10th December priced at £69.99 (only £52.49 from Amazon). This 10-disc collection features 17 films starring W.C. Fields and includes Bing's 1935 film *Mississippi.* This is a real bonus for us.

Another Nice Mess: The Saga of Stan Laurel's Home Recordings

Greg Van Beek goes in search of a rare recording with Stan Laurel's help.

For decades, there has been an on-going search for a transcription recording of Bing's Kraft Music Hall broadcast of December 25, 1941. If not the whole show, then at least a recording of a certain song featured during the broadcast, which was making its debut on the famous variety show. Introduced without much fanfare, and inserted into the show because of its timely title, it would go on to be the most beloved of Bing Crosby's enormous catalog of songs. The tune? "White Christmas".

There was some discussion about this elusive debut performance of Bing's most famous song on Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum website's message board back in September of 2004. At that time, Carl Fismer, a colorful character from the Florida Keys, contacted me. Known to his friends as "Captain Fizz", Carl is President and Founder of The Spanish Main Treasure Company. A thirty-year veteran of treasure search and salvage, Captain Carl is one of the most respected and knowledgeable professionals in the world. During his career he has worked over 300 shipwrecks in the United States, Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, the Indian Ocean and Central and South America. He has recovered millions of dollars in Spanish gold, silver, jewels and other artifacts.

"Fizz" directed part of the salvage of the Santa Margarita, sister ship to the Nuestra Senora de Atocha which was discovered by Mel Fisher. Then in 1986 he led an expedition to the Silver Shoals in the Dominican Republic, and there located the famed galleon, Concepcion which sank during a hurricane in 1641. This galleon, one of the richest ever discovered, had eluded treasure hunters for over 300 years.

Carl is also, first and foremost, a life-long fan of the comedy team Laurel & Hardy. As he said, "My father had a movie theater, so I grew up loving movies. I loved Stan and Ollie all my life. I have even turned my grandson on to them." In the late 1980's, Carl acquired a number of Stan Laurel's personal possessions from his nurses aide / housekeeper at a yard sale! As Carl explained, "Barbara said that she and Mrs. Laurel were friendly, and during the time of house cleaning (after Stan's passing in 1965), she asked if she could take the items that were being discarded. The first item was a urinal. The old metal kind with enamel paint. After that, the records, and the bible."

"Over the next several days, Stan's housekeeper (Barbara) gave me the other things many of which are just common household items with no name or initials. She kept all these in a steamer trunk with Stan's name on it. I talked with her quite a while. I used to travel there twice a year on business, and the yard sales are the best in the country. I had the idea I was saving these pieces. I realized the importance of these items, and bought them all from her except for the steamer trunk. By the time I had bought all the other items her husband knew I was a big fan of the boys, and raised the trunk price to 2000 dollars. More than I could afford. I have however kept all the items together over the years knowing the importance of these items."

Among the items Carl acquired, and the reason he contacted me in the first place, was a home recording, the yellowed label of which read, in blue fountain pen scrawl, "White Xmas – Crosby". I later learned Stan Laurel himself wrote this. It seems Stan was quite a home recording buff. He evidently had a machine with an external microphone from which he could make his own records, be it off of the radio, or live. Could this be a home recording by none other than Stan Laurel of Bing's December 25, 1941 KMH performance of "White Christmas"? It was definitely a possibility, as all of the other records Stan recorded were from the same general time frame.

I kept in touch with Carl on and off for the next three years, as he was frequently traveling to exotic locales in search of buried treasures. He had never tried to play any of Stan Laurel's records, as he had no machine capable of doing so. I wasn't sure I did either, as some home recordings started from the inside (near the label) and ran towards the outer edge of the record. Just opposite of a regular record. After much checking by Carl, prompted by questions from me, it was determined that this was a traditional ten-inch diameter record. Upon learning I had the capability to transfer records to compact disc, Carl decided to send me not just the Crosby recording, but all of Stan's home recordings to transfer to compact disc! He wanted to surprise Stan's daughter Lois with a CD copy of her father's records. I felt extremely honored to have the privilege of giving something back to the family of this comedy legend, one of my all-time

favorites to be sure.

It was in April of 2007 when the large, well-secured package of Stan's records arrived at my doorstep. There were a total of six ten-inch 78rpm records, one ten-inch LP acetate and one twelve-inch NBC Orthacoustic transcription acetate. Not the vast library of records I had anticipated, but nonetheless, an interesting assortment.

All of the records were caked with decades of dust and dirt, and most were sans record sleeves. I immediately became skeptical that they would even play. Some careful wiping with a damp cloth, going around the records with the grooves, managed to produce a black, shiny surface once again. I couldn't help but think that these records hadn't been played since Stan Laurel's passing in February of 1965, and probably long before that.

Of course the most interesting of all the records to me was the one marked "White Christmas - Crosby". But equally intriguing were four ten-inch home recordings marked in pencil on the label in Stan's handwriting. One read "Abbott & Costello 8/28/40 #1" and "Abbott & Costello 8/28/40 #3". It turns out this (and the second record marked part #2 and #4) were a home recording of the half-hour Abbott and Costello radio show from August 28, 1940. This was A&C's first radio series! They were the summer replacement for the Fred Allen Show, presented by Ipana toothpaste. Evidently Stan Laurel was such a fan of this comedy team that he took the trouble of personally recording their routines from radio for his own enjoyment and amusement! He did this for two consecutive weeks, August 28 and September 4, 1940, recording four 4-minute segments of each program. It's fascinating hearing these early Abbott & Costello routines, and laughing along with them, knowing that Stan Laurel must've had the same reaction when he first heard them some 67 years ago.

Then there was an interesting ten-inch diameter 33 1/3 rpm LP acetate with a plain white label that read "Laurel & Hardy in England". It had an inscription on the rather tattered white paper sleeve that was dedicated to Stan's widow, and dated June of 1968. The inscription indicated the record was made 36 years prior, or in 1932. It was, in fact, an acetate of a ten-inch, two-sided record Stan and Ollie recorded during their tour of England that year. I believe it was originally released in the UK on the Columbia label as a 78rpm.

A very early Presto home recording disc, dating to about 1932, was also among Stan's record collection. It was made of aluminum, and coated with a thin layer of shellac on each side. It had a plain green painted label, and the only marking on it was in fountain pen in Stan's writing that said "Morton Downey". This record was very noisy, and despite numerous gentle cleanings, all of the dirt imbedded in the grooves could not be removed. Still, it is a treasure containing two early Morton Downey recordings, including one of his signature songs, "Danny Boy". The flip side contained a song called "Just Friends". Just an organ accompanied Morton on these tunes, leading me to believe they may have been part of some sort of a private recording or performance. Perhaps it was a private performance at Stan Laurel's home and recorded by Stan for his own enjoyment.

The twelve-inch, 33 1/3 rpm NBC Orthacoustic Transcription acetate was obviously a gift sent to Stan. The label reads only "HI Mom 8/19/60", which led me to initially think this may have been a record Stan had commissioned to have made. Upon listening, I discovered it was, in fact, a recording of a television panel discussion show of some kind that aired on NBC August 19, 1960, starring Bert Wheeler (of the comedy team Wheeler and Woolsey), Chuck McCann and Al Kilgore each paying tribute to Stan Laurel. It was mentioned during the course of the conversations that a transcription was being made to send to Stan, and this evidently was the result. Nothing exceptionally funny is contained on the record, however it was a treat to hear another comedy legend Bert Wheeler after all those years since his partner passed away (Woolsey died in 1937).

Lastly, we come to what I had hoped would be the crown jewel of the Stan Laurel record collection, the acetate labeled "White Christmas-Crosby". It was a one –sided disc (Stan never got around to recording anything on the flip side), and I remember my heart racing with anticipation as I carefully set the needle down on the record, the first person to do so in over sixty years to be sure. It was very scratchy, and recorded at low volume, but I recognized instantly the familiar strains of Bing's 1942 Decca commercial recording of the song. Could it be that Stan Laurel was a closet bootlegger, trying to make another copy of a record already commercially available?

He must've been playing what I assume was his own copy of the Decca recording Bing made on May 29, 1942 on a separate phonograph, and holding the microphone of his home recording unit in front of the speaker to try to make another record of the record. But there was something strange revealed to me as I listened to this acetate for the first time. Another song was bleeding through Bing's vocal on "White Christmas". Listening closely, I determined it was the flip side of Bing's commercial recording of "White Christmas" on the American Decca label, "Let's Start The New Year Right"! It's as though Stan tried recording the B side of the record first on the acetate, aborted the recording, and tried recording the A side (or White Christmas) over the top of it! White Christmas ends, and then there's a passage of silence, and the song begins again. It was just enough time to allow Stan to lift the tone arm from the phonograph and placed it back at the beginning of the record. But there's something else revealed towards the end of the record, a female voice obviously talking to

Stan. Perhaps Mrs. Laurel. I couldn't make out all of what she had to say, but one portion came through loud and clear, "....with a bottle of scotch in one hand and a drink in the other"! To whom this mystery voice was referring to is anyone's guess.

After I transferred the material first to cassette, I then recorded everything as wav files on the computer from the tape. I assembled it all on one CD, and made three copies, as requested by Carl; one for him, one for Dr. Bob Salk, (who has been working with Carl to restore Stan's yacht the Ida May), and one for Stan's daughter Lois. The original records, now cleaned and put in fresh new sleeves, were all returned to Lois, along with a copy of the CD. Carl was ecstatic. He wrote me, "I know Lois will be happy for all your efforts. Stan Laurel is going to live forever as long as there are people like us in this world. I owe you big time, and if you're ever in the Florida Keys let me know."

The story of Stan's yacht the Ida May is itself quite interesting. The full story can be found at www.idamay.org. Stan purchased the yacht from the estate of former owner Willard Van Brunt (the original owner and designer of the Ida May) in 1935. Van Brunt was President of the exclusive Tuna Club on Catalina Island. The Tuna club, a members only club of the affluent and elite was by invitation only. Originally, only 100 members where accepted. Many celebrities, dignitaries, and past U.S. Presidents have been members (Stan Laurel, Ernest Hemingway, Charlie Chaplin, Bing Crosby, Winston Churchill, General George S. Patton, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover).

Upon purchasing the Ida May, Stan Laurel changed the name of the yacht from Ida May to Ruth L. after his second wife, Ruth Laurel. Stan was an avid fisherman, and loved the yacht. Many notable celebrities and dignitaries were invited onboard the Ruth L. by Stan, such as Oliver Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, Joe Kennedy, Gloria Swanson, Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallee, Hal Roach (famous director of Laurel and Hardy, Our Gang and the Little Rascals), Charley Chase (comedian, actor, and The Three Stooges Director and Producer), James Parrot, Mae West, Zazu Pitts, Fred Quimby (Tom & Jerry cartoon creator), Orson Wells, W.C. Fields, Babe Ruth, William and P.K. Wrigley (Wrigley Spearmint Gum and former Chicago Cubs owner), the Prince of Kuwait, Jack Dempsey and Zane Grey (famous western novelist and fishing legend) to name a few.

All in all, it was a fascinating experience for me, restoring these old records, researching them and bringing them back to life again after all these years. As a whole, they represent a veritable cornucopia of mostly interesting, albeit somewhat strange material. When first faced with the daunting task of bringing sound from these grubby, battered old disks, I couldn't help but think of the famous line Oliver Hardy said time and time again to Stan Laurel: "Here's another nice mess you've gotten me into!"

Greg Van Beek

The Attic

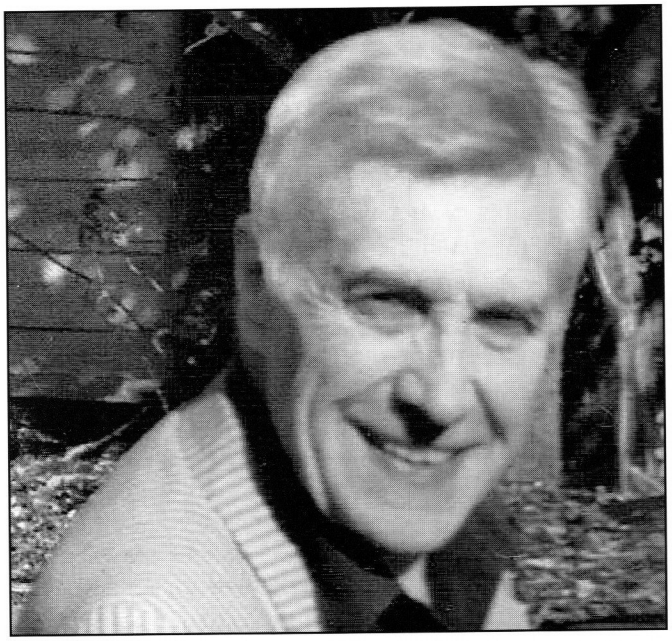
John Walton has been singing professionally for most of his life. But has he reached a crossroads?

Have you read Oscar Wilde's novel 'The Picture Of Dorian Gray'? It's the one where Dorian has a portrait of himself in his attic. The portrait gradually ages, leaving his real self totally impervious to the ravages of time. In writing the story, Wilde found it necessary to pander to Victorian sensitivities by ensuring that, as the narrative unfolded, Dorian's personality deteriorated until he paid, Faustus-like, for his privilege.

What a wasted opportunity! You and I with a portrait in such a charmed place wouldn't be avaricious and selfish, would we? After all, we are Bing fans! We would ensure that our being forever young and beautiful on the outside would be balanced by oodles of youth and beauty within. Actually, I don't have too much of a problem with the fading of my looks because I was only ever 50% of young and beautiful. So, while I'm now distinguished in appearance – only envious people like Myerscough next door have used the word 'wizened' – I haven't any of the paranoia of the faded adonis.

But I would not exorcise the attic. If I possessed such a loft I'd put it to more appropriate use. On the day I acquired it, I'd start early with fifteen minutes of inter-costal diaphragmatic breathing, followed by a little 'steaming'. (This is a perfectly legal practice that wakes up the larynx with a sort of scour.) After consigning the dog to the kitchen, I'd continue with a short spell of 'sirenning' and some long notes across a couple of octaves. Then, ignoring Myerscough's usual jealous rantings about the noise, I'd dip into a few scales, gradually giving vent to serious decibel increase. To round off, I'd indulge in a slice of "Ol' Man River" for the low notes, a morsel of "Surrey With The Fringe On

Top" for the middle range and a pinch of "Busy Doin' Nothin'" for the head tones. (The 'lie-lie la-la-la-lie' part is ideal for bullying the vocal tackle into conceding notes above D on the stave.) Finally, with the voice thus fortified, I'd record "Mississippi Mud", burn it on a CD and place the CD in the attic.



The fading John Walton

Think of the joy I would experience year on year when, playing back my recording, I'd hear an increasing amount of croaks, wobbles and wheezes until the voice couldn't be distinguished from that of a frog in the Mud. Conversely, my real voice - the voice I take to gigs and sell on the Internet – would have sustained the purity of its erstwhile 30-year-old self!

Dream on! My only real option is damage limitation. But all is not lost. OK, I'll admit that my voice has mellowed a little with age but, like all true professionals, I can compensate. I can select keys more carefully, use better mike technique and employ a more dramatic and poignant approach. ('Dramatic' and 'poignant' are very good for getting the breath back!) After all, my vocal folds have not shrunk as much as the calf muscles of an old sprinter. They're not as diminished as the zip in a retired ball player's throwing arm. I'll still be able to vocally caress ears for the next ten to fifteen years. Won't I?

To stem an unaccountably rising panic I'm consulting 'Care Of The Professional Voice' by D. Garfield Davies and Anthony F. Jahn and, with characteristic directness, I'm going straight to the chapter entitled 'Age and Voice' from which I now quote:

'With ageing, there is generally a loss of muscle mass, suppleness and muscular fine control. In some cases, this deterioration in fine control is worsened by tremor….'

'… one visible sign of ageing is the bowing of the vocal folds…'

'The ageing person tends to lose teeth. Partial loss of dentition can alter the articulation. Older patients, and especially edentulous patients, also tend to complain of a dry mouth, due to a diminution of the amount of saliva secreted.' (Fleeting thought: I use a British dentist!)

'The wise artist……will prefer to end her professional career with dignity……rather than continue a losing fight until all beauty has left her once admired tones'

Reading on, I find there's a whole lot of other encouraging stuff about vocal nodules, cysts, polyps and a particularly nasty condition called Reinke's Oedema.

Could you just give me a minute?

Right, I give in. I take the point. I'm deluding myself if I think that, at nearly seventy, I can still stand up there and entertain people. Clearly, their sporadic ripples of applause are simply expressions of pity. From now on, I'll sit at home and listen to Diana Krall, Jamie Cullum, Michael Bublé and Anya Thomson. I'll reacquaint myself with all my old Bing tracks; watch again that TV programme Tony Bennett recorded to celebrate his eightieth birthday.

Hang on, Tony Bennett was brilliant on his eightieth birthday! No one knows more about 'dramatic' and 'poignant' than he does. Of course, he didn't sound like he used to when he was 35, but his performance was just as spellbinding. He was still able to perform that trick of discarding his mike for a bit, just to show he hasn't lost the power. These days his voice has a characteristic croak which he uses to good effect in almost conversational phrasing. It's a terrific foil against his sudden explosions into searing high notes; sublime technique harnessed as ever to vivid interpretation. His intonation, phrasing and timing are as meticulously crafted as ever; his ability to empathise with musicians exemplary.

His brother sang opera. Now if Tony had followed the same route, his career would have been over decades ago. The professional voice of classical singing is defined by such prescriptive templates that Tony Bennett's croak would be way outside the accepted parameters. And I can't imagine where Louis Armstrong would figure. Davies and Jahn could no doubt pontificate on whether Mr Bennett's croak and Mr Armstrong's gravel are the result of polyps, nodules or vocal fold bowing. Nowadays, there are courses for singers where they can actually watch their larynxes on a screen while they warble. Voices no longer have to be heard; they can be appreciated by sight alone. (Oh, what wonderful flexible folds, all pink and polyp free! And such thrilling undulation!)

Jazz and standards singing is a predominantly cerebral activity. Of course it's important to have a larynx that allows you to sing in tune across one-and-a-half octaves, and also a vocal timbre that's not essentially irritating. But there are thousands of people

who can sing pleasantly on key across such a range. What separates them from the great song stylists, however, is the latters' ability to apply immaculate timing, inspired phrasing, distinctive timbre and perfect intonation, and, importantly, to do this straight from the subconscious with their thoughts focused on interpretation.

Singers who continue successfully into old age do stress the importance of regular practice. Bing thought it important to "sing a little every day". Cleo Laine, still going strong at eighty, has a regime of regular vocal exercise and is quoted as saying that, as soon as anyone discerns the tell-tale 'wobble' of old age, they must tell her and she'll stop. The amazing Frank Holder, who worked with Cleo and her husband, John Dankworth, in the fifties, is now 81. I spoke to both him and his wife after a recent concert where he sang and played percussion like a 30-year-old. Frank said: "You must never give up. Work at it every day. Once you stop you're finished!" His wife pointed out that his whole life was geared to tours and performances, that he worked out daily and was scrupulous in choosing the right things to eat. Only Perry Como when interviewed on his eightieth birthday said that, as soon as he woke up every morning, the voice was there. Perhaps Perry was sticking to the old adage of "Never let your audience see the work". Or maybe, because he had such an amazingly powerful and flexible voice as a young man, he could afford to lose most of it and still keep up with the rest of us. Malcolm Macfarlane's forthcoming book on Perry may throw more light on how hard he really practised.

He doesn't sound like the same man! How many times have you heard that exclamation when you've followed a thirties Bing track with one from the sixties. Bing's career spanned six decades, during three of which he was at the very top of the pile. So of course his voice changed, as all voices do anyway. His style of the thirties, while 'relaxed' in comparison with non-microphone singers of earlier years, nevertheless started with stridency which he then made beautiful. Later, Bing was to say that singers of his genre never gave a thought to preserving the voice. He was inventing something new. His voice made impact without adhering to any of the tried and tested norms.

So he developed nodules. Have you noticed how the characteristic croak has diminished from Rod Stewart's voice since he had his own nodules removed and turned to the Great American Songbook? Bing had no operation. He simply adjusted his keys downwards and carried on. His schedule over the next twenty years was arguably the most punishing that any vocalist has ever endured. But, like Frank Holder, he never stopped. At moments when the voice was working less well, he was the first to concede this, as in the letter to John Scott Trotter in the autumn of 1954.

But the voice always came back, sometimes slightly modified. Any changes seemed to have been duly noted and adjustments made accordingly. As stated earlier, successful singing of popular music is predominantly cerebral and no one ever brought more intelligence to it than Bing Crosby. Bing's often mentioned vocal deterioration in the sixties seems to be more the result of middle-aged weariness with his craft than any innate loss of ability. When committed he could still turn in some wonderful performances. I was amazed by the standard of his work at the London Palladium in 1977 and hugely appreciative of his final albums.

What would Bing think about today's TV shows with singing 'experts' intensively coaching their protégées into all sounding like each other? The formula for a ballad: start quietly; build up to a 'belt' on the second chorus; finish by pushing up the chest voice to achieve a high G to tumultuous applause. 'Make sure the throat is fully open, darling!' 'That's it, support from the diaphragm!' These and other such mantra may be heard echoing constantly around the training studios. But one thing is certain: they'll all need the attic. That is, unless they can learn to adapt, deviate, and accommodate, as Bing did.

He needed no attic. Did he sing better in 1935 or 1952? 1943 or 1961? What about 1976? This debate in itself could fuel Steven Lewis's Bing board for years to come. My theory is that Bing sounds at his best on the recordings we first hear. Until we take on board the professionalism behind the 'ordinary-guy-who-can-carry-a-tune' image, we tend to stick with our first enthrallment and prefer his singing then to that in other phases. For a full appreciation of Bing, however, we

must experience the complete journey, from brash young innovator to seasoned consummate professional. Then, as we begin to see a little of the man behind the performances, we realise that nothing changed of any significance.

Has this article told you anything you didn't already know? Probably not, but it's been very effective therapy for me. Having first convinced myself that not another note will pass my lips, I shall now resume with vigour. I shall 'sing a little every day', continue to steam and continue to siren. As for Myerscough, I'm already planning a particularly gruesome end involving high Gs and eardrums. But you will let me know if I get the 'wobble', won't you?

Oh, and by the way, Dorian Gray can keep his attic.

John Walton

The Boswell Sisters Centennial

November 30-December 3, 2007
New Orleans, Louisiana

December 3, 2007 would have been Connie Boswell's 100th birthday. In honor of this milestone, the Boswell Sisters Centennial Committee organised a weekend of live music, seminars, labs and more to honor the innovation, influence and achievements of the Boswell Sisters.

The committee issued the following notes.

ABOUT THE BOSWELL SISTERS

The Boswell Sisters (Martha, Connie and Helvetia) were three talented New Orleans musicians who parlayed a childhood of classical music education into a groundbreaking career as jazz harmony singers. Raised at 3937 Camp Street in Uptown, New Orleans, the sisters honed their craft by performing at schools, club events, Christmas parties and fundraisers, and the city's first radio stations. By 1925 they recorded their first songs for Victor Records in New Orleans and got their big break when a national act cancelled at the local Orpheum Theater and they were hired as a replacement. The Boswell Sisters left New Orleans in 1928 and their jazz harmony singing catapulted them to international fame. Backed by musicians like the Dorsey Brothers, Bunny Berigan, Venuti and Lang, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw and the orchestras of Victor Young and Jimmy Grier, the Sisters dominated the airwaves between 1931 and 1936.

Beginning with their own national radio show in 1930 and later alternating with the Mills Brothers as guests on Bing Crosby's syndicated show, they became the sound to lighten the heart of the Depression. They made movies, played Broadway and toured Europe. They cut hit songs on the Brunswick label and were among the small stable of stars that Jack Kapp used to launch Decca Records.

Bing with the Boswell Sisters.

Their influence was acknowledged by artists as diverse as Crosby himself, the Andrews Sisters, Frank Sinatra, Mel Torme, Harry Belafonte and Wynonna Judd. Although influential and universally appealing, the Sisters were anything but middle of the road. Their vocal style, repertoire, even their personal circumstances were potential stumbling blocks to success in a society that feared transgressions of gender roles, race, class and (for celebrities) physical perfection. The Boswell Sisters challenged norms with their musical knowledge, their arrangements, their choice of songs, and their performance of race and class. Connie's physical disability (polio-induced paralysis) made her an unlikely candidate for a career that included Broadway, Hollywood and more. They were the top trio in the world when Martha and Helvetia married and retired in 1936.

Connie Boswell continued to perform as a soloist and had many hit records during the late 30s and early 40s. She sang the Oscar nominated "Whispers in the Dark" in the 1937 film *Artists and Models*, and appeared in several movies. She made a great vocal partner with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall show and recorded a number of hits with him. She also launched the trend of "swinging the classics" with her hit recording of "Martha."

Denied the opportunity to entertain troops overseas due to her disability, Connie served her country during World War II by singing to soldiers in stateside hospitals. Connie's career took off again in the early 50s with more hits and even a starring role in the 1959 NBC TV series, *Pete Kelly's Blues*. By the time Connie retired in 1963, she and her sisters had recorded over 300 songs, sold 70 million records and changed American popular music forever.

(Editor: I think the sales figures should be treated with care but the sisters were certainly influential.)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. With the strengthening of the Canadian currency against the US dollar, Canadian purchasers should now pay CAN $16.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Larry Bowerman, UK (phone: 0208 4210841, email: lawrencecallydog@aol.com)

"My late father Wag Bowerman was a member of the ICC for many years until his death some two years ago. He left me his collection of Bing LPs and they are gathering dust in my loft at home. He would be heart broken if he could see them now and they really do need a new home with a Bing fan or fans who would love them the way Dad did. I have tried various record stores and they all say the same thing - they need to go to a specialist collector. Where better to try than the ICC, so I wonder if you have any ideas on how I can find a new home for some 30/40 records of the great man himself. I can list them all if that would in any way help. We shall be moving to a new home in the months to come and will not have the room for them and fear for their future. I do hope that you can be of help and look forward to hearing from you."

Please contact Larry direct.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Dave Hall, Flat 10, 68 Kingston Rd., Portsmouth, Hants PO2 7PA, UK (Phone: 07758 482 597)

Dave offers the *Bing Crosby Album*, an 80 page magazine published by Dell Distributing Inc in 1977. Price £5 plus postage. Dave also has a number of 45s, EPs and LPs of Bing for sale. Contact him for a list.

John Marshall, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0QD, UK (e-mail: carson1812@blueyonder.co.uk)

John has a series of Crosby DVDs available as follows: 1. The Big Broadcast/Here Is My Heart 2. She Loves Me Not/College Humor 3. Too Much Harmony/Anything Goes – each DVD contains two films, as shown and is available for £10. Films have been professionally converted from NTSC to PAL for UK viewers.

John also a DVD containing a 160-minute interview with Skitch Henderson, who worked closely with Bing over many years, together with footage of Bing's Palladium Bar interview in 1977 – one of the last he gave. This DVD is available for £8.

Finally, John has six volumes of his "Footloose Follies" DVDs available at £12 each. These run for four hours each and feature a mass of rare video footage, including Bing, Russ Columbo, Judy Garland, Frances Langford, Perry Como and dozens more. More details from John.

Mrs. Hazel Moore, 1 Elm Grove, South Shields NE34 8AZ, UK (Tel: 0191 456 2207)

Mrs. Moore has to dispose of her late husband's collection and following an earlier advert, she has passed on some Bing memorabilia. However she still has a large portion of the collection remaining. She says that anyone who would like the remainder of the collection in full can have it for free if they are willing to collect it from her home. Contact Mrs. Moore direct please.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 398 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Stan Woodford, 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 6QA, UK (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website:

www.geocities.com/one_sonoma_rose/BingsHomePage.html

Regular newsletters are issued.

The Australian Bing Crosby Club

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

The society has recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and it still has thirteen of the original members extant. Regular newsletters are issued and the society holds regular film nights. In August for example, Bing's movies *If I Had My Way* and *Road To Utopia* were shown. Bob Neate and Ken Boness have a regular programme on behalf of the Society on Eastern FM which is heard from 11am to noon every Tuesday.

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

www.BingCrosby.com

This site has now been launched under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows and a great clip from *Here Is My Heart* amongst others.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune) Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK (Tel: 01594 842991)

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743)

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

1. The House That George Built With a Little Help From Irving, Cole, and a Crew of About 50

by Wilfrid Sheed. Illustrated. 335 pages. Random House. $29.95.

Bing makes 29 cameo appearances in Wilfrid Sheed's new book. Sheed, the novelist and critic, is writing about American popular songwriters in the first two-thirds of the 20th century. Any discussion of the songs of that period has to bring up Bing, Sheed does—often and generally favorably.

Sheed calls his memory book "The House That George Built, with a Little Help from Irving, Cole, and a Crew of About 50." The book is longer than the title, and better.

Sheed recalls to the letter the lyrics of hundreds of those wonderful songs. But he focuses on composers, arguing that any great song must have a memorable melody, illustrated by a lovely lyric. In the world he is watching, lyricists tend to be second-class citizens.

And Sheed insists on another measure of a great song. He matches the work against his ideal of what he terms "the jazz song mode." Not everyone will agree with his definitions, but the entertainment is there.

His Big Five composers for the era are Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Richard Rodgers. Of those, Gershwin and Porter escape with the fewest reservations. Even the sainted Irving Berlin comes in for a few lumps. The other 50 composers and wordsmiths come close—sometimes—to Sheed's jazz song standard.

He calls his book a labor of love. It clearly is. He pulled it together not just from the songs he sang but from talks over the years with still-living members of his pantheon and with those who knew them, including Kathryn Crosby.

Bing enters, stage right, in Sheed's very first paragraph. Recalling voices like Caruso belting arias in vast, unamplified halls, Sheed says "With the coming of microphones, singing became more personal, and the name became Bing Crosby, the world's friendliest voice."

That casts Bing in his familiar guise as the First Man Who Knew How to Use a Microphone. "By 1925, the human voice had finally begun to sound like itself on records, under the official leadership of Bing Crosby, who was a great jazz singer capable of keeping things going in the right direction for a while."

Bing pops up, with Hoagy Carmichael and others, among the singers who were trying to insert as much jazz as they could into their commercial work. Fair comment, again.

The definition of jazz is broad in Sheed's work. He tastes a jazz flavor in Jerome Kern's 1914 "They Didn't Believe Me" and compliments Kern for "the greatest of American songs," "All the Things You Are"—jazz or not.

With Bing succeeding Maurice Chevalier as Paramount's music star, Sheed observes: "Crosby, in his acting style at least, was no respecter of persons of any kind. It was his first order of business to lower the tone of any joint he was in, and the tone of the songs as well, which would now need to contain more jazz and more schmalz to service the famous throb in his voice, a sound more Tin Pan Alley then Broadway." Sheed documents by 1936 "Crosby's own evolution from a groaner to the streamlined crooning machine that people remember today."

With his enduring interest in religious issues, Sheed argues that as a result of Bing's decision to play priests in several films, Crosby's "natural tendency to keep his sins under his hat... found itself reinforced by clerical mandate."

As for "White Christmas," Irving Berlin's and Bing Crosby's most lasting effort, Sheed cannot even choke out the two words in the title. His aversion to Christmas songs extinguishes any attempt to find even bit worthy in the Berlin-Crosby triumph.

Sheed does not flinch from recounting the personal lives of his subjects. Richard Rodgers presents as an insufferable alcoholic. Johnny Mercer is charming when sober, nasty when drunk.

The book brings back the seemingly easy rapport between Crosby and Mercer in their recording duets. It doesn't mention television's breathtaking Crosby-Mercer medley of 42 Mercer songs. Nor does it recall Mercer's bitter, profane dismissal of Crosby near the end of their lives—maybe a nasty-drunk moment.

Those who cherish the memory of 20th century popular songs cannot do better than read Sheed. He restores that extraordinary age to life in a most hummable style.

Bob Achorn

2. When Jolson Was King

By Richard Grudens. Published by Celebrity Profiles Publishing, Box 344, Main Street, Stonybrook, New York 11790-0344. (Phone: [631] 862-8555, email celebpro4@aol.com,
web site: www.richardgrudens.com) Soft cover, 301 pages, ISBN: 0-9763877-2-7. $16.50 from Amazon.

This is Richard Grudens' latest book and it is reviewed here because of the many references to Bing contained in it. The author describes the book as:

> "A celebration and a guided tour of one man's career. . . Surfing, as they say today, Al Jolson's wondrous years is what this book is all about."

Surfing is a good description as Richard's book is a review of the showbiz scene during the Jolson years with interviews with many celebrities. Short essays cover various aspects of Jolson's career and there is even a section about Jolson imitators. An interesting book which can also be dipped into rewardingly. Packed with illustrations, the book contains a nice tribute to Bing and there are a number of photos of Bing too. Another section covers Jack Kapp. Incidentally, Richard's book *Bing Crosby-Crooner of the Century* which we reviewed in BING #133 remains available.

3. "The Best Damn Trumpet Player" – Memories of the Big Band Era and Beyond.

By Richard Grudens. Published by Celebrity Profiles Publishing, Box 344, Main Street, Stonybrook, New York 11790-0344. (Phone: [631] 862-8555, email celebpro4@aol.com,
web site: www.richardgrudens.com) Soft cover, 186 pages, ISBN: 1-57579-011-4. $15.95

This was Richard's first book published in 1997 but a copy has only just come into my hands. Let me quote the author:

> "The Big Bands did for me what I'm certain Elvis Presley or John Lennon did for others. They served up that needed musical nourishment."

The book looks at the Big Band era with essays on such as Harry James, The Andrews Sisters, Ray Anthony, Frankie Laine, Count Basie, Tony Bennett, Benny Goodman and many others. It contains a chapter entitled 'Bing Crosby's Musical Legacy' which opens with a description of the author's first meeting with Bing in 1952 at NBC in New York before taking a look at Bing's career. And who was the best damn trumpet player? It seems to be a honour shared between Louis Armstrong and Harry James. Again it's an ideal book to dip into.

4. Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture

Edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck. Published by the University of Rochester Press on November 1. ISBN-10: 1580462618. ISBN-13: 978-1580462617. Hardcover, $39.95

We were eagerly awaiting this as we went to press. We'll review it next time.

Serendipity

Michael Collins from Florida has been browsing along his book shelves.

Last week, I inadvertently stumbled on to what you might call 'Benny Green territory.' I had been browsing through Fred Hall's *Dialogues in Swing*, a signed copy of which must have been on my shelves for two decades, when my attention was drawn to an interview which Fred did with songwriter Jimmy Van Heusen back in 1981. In the course of their conversation, Jimmy spoke about his long association with Sinatra and Crosby ("Bing was the grand daddy of them all. He taught them all how to sing.").

He was also quizzed about his favourite songs, a deceptively simple question but one which often proves to be a difficult one for any creative artist to answer. Van Heusen returned to the topic later.

"Probably the best song for Sinatra that I like was not written for Sinatra, and it was not written for Bing, was *Here's That Rainy Day...*" The syntax got a little tangled here, but do bear in mind that this is a transcript from a live interview. The song was composed more than fifty years ago though I must confess I came to it rather late. Indeed, it was not until the early Seventies that I heard it for the first time. I well recall the occasion. It was performed by Brian Fahy, an orchestra which was often featured by the BBC in those days. I paid particular attention as I had come to know Brian some years previously.

As often happens with such things, I then heard it a couple of times in quick succession and in different versions. Though many years would pass before I found out who composed it, some instinct told me that it came from a good stable. The song intrigued me because I always thought it contained a perfect example of what songwriters often refer to as "the hook". This is a musical and/or lyrical phrase, often repeated, which lifts the song out of the ordinary and which impresses itself upon the mind of the listener. It is the punch line of the joke, so to speak, the bit that sends you out into the street whistling and later along to the record store to purchase a copy. The lyrics by Johnny Burke are based on an unusual conceit, namely that just as we save for a rainy day, we must also shore up "those left over dreams" against the day when a relationship has run its course.

Having dug a little deeper, I discovered that the song

comes from a 1953 show *Carnival in Flanders* which itself was based on the 1934 French comedy film *La Kermesse Heroique*, set in early 17th Century Belgium. The show's chief financial backer was none other than Bing Crosby. Alas, the Groaner seems to have put the kiss of death on the whole affair. Either because of misplaced confidence or loyalty, or a mixture of both, Bing insisted on underwriting the project despite the fact that the songwriting team's previous collaboration *Nellie Bly* (1946) had been a critical and box office failure. *Carnival in Flanders* opened on Broadway on September 8, 1953 and closed after only six performances.

This is the point at which the late Mr. Green would begin his journey down labyrinthine, but always fascinating paths in an effort to establish what precisely separates the competent songsmith from the first rate popular composer, to determine why Burke & Van Heusen, for all their estimable craftsmanship, never quite make it to the A List. I am happy to leave such lofty speculations to Benny's illustrious shade. What I find most curious is that, while this is a song which was surely tailor-made for Bing, he never actually recorded it; nor can I find any evidence that he ever sang it on air. The only two versions in my collection are by Peggy Lee (1960) and Perry Como. Perry included it in one of his famous television medleys. It was later re-recorded in the RCA studios.

To end on a very different note, I pass on the following nugget from the writer and broadcaster Joan Bakewell's recent book on the ageing process. "Time accelerates as it starts to run out on us." Joan, incidentally, was at one time a great fan of Bing's and may still be for all I know. John Mortimer's *Summer of a Dormouse* has a similar theme. He, too, was dismayed by those fleeting years and asked his friend, the great verse dramatist, Christopher Fry for his thoughts. Fry was then in his ninety-third year and told Mortimer to wait until he reached eighty when he would find that breakfast comes around every five minutes. It is hard to imagine that fifty years have passed since Michael Holliday, one of Bing's most gifted protégés, went into the soon to be famous Abbey Road studios to record what was to become his greatest hit, *The Story Of My Life*. Pupil and master have long since gone the way of all flesh, but their memory lingers on.

Michael Collins

(Note: Benny Green was a popular writer and broadcaster who had a regular Sunday afternoon programme on BBC Radio 2 when he looked in depth into the background of songs and their writers.)

BINGING AROUND

Pete Cakanic's slot.

The Bing Crosby sound and style influenced every singer that followed "including rock stars whether they know it or not," Tony Bennett stated in his autobiography.

Bing's mastery of the microphone and his conversational singing as if he were singing to everyone personally also influenced the 32nd president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This is pointed out in a best selling book published in 2006, "The Defining Moment - FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope" The author, Jonathon Alter, a Newsweek Magazine senior editor and commentator on MSNBC's cable television, mentions Bing three times in the book which was reissued in paperback in 2007.

FDR didn't want to shout into the microphone and was looking for a new way to reach a radio audience in his first "fireside chat". He watched workmen constructing a scaffold and others tradesmen laying out electric lines and he thought he would talk in a tone and manner as if he were talking to them.

Mr. Alter says FDR used his finely tuned voice in that broadcast on March 13, 1933. "What Bing Crosby did for singing, the newly elected president did for speaking."

A week earlier as events for the inaugural ball at the Washington Auditorium got underway on Mar. 4, 1933; the year's star crooner, Bing Crosby, was appearing at Loews' Journal Square Theatre in Jersey City, N.J. In attendance was 17 year old Frank Sinatra who in later years said that was the time when he decided to try show business. ("BING a Diary of a Lifetime", compiled by BING editor Malcolm Macfarlane for the ICC confirms the date).

Mr. Alter is in error in reporting Bing singing what became the Democratic Party theme song, "Happy Days Are Here Again"

He tells it thusly: "A woman reporter from New York wandered into FDR's Chicago headquarters and mentioned a song written by Jack Yellin and Milton Ager for the 1930 MGM movie *Chasing Rainbows* that was getting some air play that year as a cigarette ad. Louis Howe's secretary Lela Stiles ran up and down the suite singing the song, snapping her fingers until Howe, motioned her to stop. He picked up the phone to rasp to the organ player at the convention hall to play" Happy Days Are Here Again." when Roosevelt's name was placed in nomination. (N.B. Howe was to FDR what Karl Rove is to President George W. Bush.)

The book says "The tune was soon recorded by Bing Crosby, became the number one song in 1932". However, Bing never recorded the song or had ever sung it publicly. A check of Frans Van Der Kolff's great "Songography" shows no evidence that Bing had ever mouthed the song. And Bing was a Republican anyway.

But thanks Jonathon for giving our Bing a plug...

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This past July 27, the Chaplain Corps of the U.S. Military marked its 232nd anniversary. Bing helped them

in their celebration. It was held at Fort Gordon, Augusta, Ga. The Army base is part of the Signal Corps. It's said to be the world's largest center training the American military and allied soldiers in military electronics.

The Chaplain Corps is the second oldest corps, preceded only by the infantry, according to an article in The Signal, the army post's newspaper The former editor of BINGANG and coeditor of BING, Wayne Martin, trained at this base during the Korean War.

After opening remarks by Chaplain (Col.) Mitchell Morton and the singing of the national anthem, "Bing Crosby sang the official march of the Chaplain Corps, "Soldiers of God." It was on a CD downloaded from cyberspace, Chaplain Morton related to BING magazine.

The article says, "Crosby, a devout Catholic, first sang the song on his radio show, Kraft Music Hall (NBC) on April 6, 1944. Bing did not record "Soldiers of God." He sang it one more time, April 19, 1944 on a "Stars of NBC" radio show, Van Der Kolff's Songography shows.

The march has a nice melody and Bing is in excellent voice (as he always is on anything to do with religion.) I have it on CD 277 KMH from The Redmond Nostalgia Co., P.O. Box 82, Redmond, WA. 98073-0082

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Bing appears between book covers again in "Finding Your Famous (& Infamous) Ancestors."

In a boxed and shaded long paragraph, author Rhonda McClure headlines "I'm Dreaming of a Celebrity Cousin" It goes on:" Whenever I begin researching a celebrity, especially if I see the lineage heading to New England, I keep a lookout for my own surname. It was through my own Mayflower connection that I found a celebrity cousin that I was thrilled to find. Having grown up watching Bing Crosby in movies and on television, he will always remind me of white Christmases even though I no longer get to see them. He was quite proud of his membership in the Society of Mayflower Descendents. And it is through this ancestor, William Brewster, that he (Bing) and I are connected as ninth cousins, four times removed. It may not be close, but I was happy all the same when I made the discovery."

Glad to see Bing getting some ink, no matter how far removed.

Pete Cakanic

Email: bingfan@comcast.net. Or phone 803-278-0645

(Editor: Thanks, Pete. Pete was one of several members who were featured by their local newspaper when seeking publicity for the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing. Pete didn't really want to be mentioned but local papers always want a local angle and Pete was it! Here's what Donnie Fetter of The Augusta Chronicle had to say on October 14.)

Crosby fan sings praise

North Augusta man remembers crooner on anniversary of death

Unlike Elvis Presley or John Lennon, whose popularity swelled in the years after their deaths, entertainer Bing Crosby's status seems to have diminished three decades after he died.

However, Pete Cakanic will mourn the passing of the iconic crooner today, the 30th anniversary of his death.

Many recognize Crosby as the voice behind "White Christmas", one of the most popular recordings in entertainment history. For Mr. Cakanic, remembering Crosby for one song is like only remembering Frank Sinatra for "Fly Me to the Moon".

"I remember a few years back, Billboard (magazine) did a 'top singers of the century list' and Bing wasn't on there," Mr. Cakanic said. "I can't believe that. How can you ignore someone who meant so much to music?"

Crosby's legacy extends beyond the songs he recorded, Mr. Cakanic said.

"He was the first person to truly master the microphone," he said. "He understood how to make it work and how to use it to enhance his voice. Every singer today owes that to him."

Even a former president is indebted to Crosby, Mr. Cakanic said.

"(Franklin D. Roosevelt) liked the way Bing used his voice, and he learned to use his voice the same way for his fireside chats," he said.

A master of many music genres, Crosby helped to mainstream country music and jazz, Mr. Cakanic said.

"He was great at scat," Mr. Cakanic said. "He was probably the first white singer to use it in his songs."

Mr. Cakanic said many forget that Crosby was an Oscar-winning actor for *Going My Way* and was nominated three other times for an acting Academy Award and four times for Best Song in film.

"He could do it all," Mr. Cakanic said. "Bing was a master of radio, recording and film. At that time, you didn't have superstars or divas, but what he was, in the 1930s and 1940s, could definitely be called a superstar."

In a small study of his North Augusta home, Mr. Cakanic maintains his Crosby memorabilia, which includes about 50 books, more than 250 CDs by Crosby, old movie posters and an assortment of vinyl recordings.

"Some of this stuff might be worth something, but I don't think I would ever sell it," he said. "I keep this because I like his music, not to make money."

Mr. Cakanic, 78, was first turned on to Crosby as a boy in the 1940s.

"My sister and I would always fight over what we were going to listen to on the radio," Mr. Cakanic recalled. "I wanted to hear The Lone Ranger, but she always wanted to hear Bing's radio show. We started taking turns each week, and I grew to like him. What he

could do with a song was amazing."

As far as Crosby's legacy is concerned, Mr. Cakanic blames the media for tarnishing his reputation.

'Going My Own Way', a biography of Crosby by his son, Gary, and Ross Firestone, painted the singer as an abusive father, which was played up in tabloids, Mr. Cakanic said. Those accusations were denied by other family members of Crosby and later recanted by Gary Crosby, Mr. Cakanic said.

"I don't believe he ever abused his children," Mr. Cakanic said. "I believe he was strict. He didn't want his kids growing up to be Hollywood brats. When you see people like Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears today, it seems to me a lot of those Hollywood parents could have learned a thing or two from Bing."

Donnie Fetter

Larry Crosby

Carolyn Schneider tells us about another one of her Uncles

Frequently, when Uncle Bing was being interviewed by the media he would be asked about his "favorites". For example, they wanted to know which of his films he enjoyed making the most, or what recording he thought was his best, and so on. In his later years, when being interviewed along those same lines, a reporter posed the question: "what would you consider to be your greatest life's achievement, Bing?" Without hesitation he replied, "The Pro Am."

Most of us are well aware of the outstanding golf tournament that Bing sponsored for so many years, on the Monterey Peninsula of California. Larry, Bing's brother, managed the tournament from 1947 to the end.

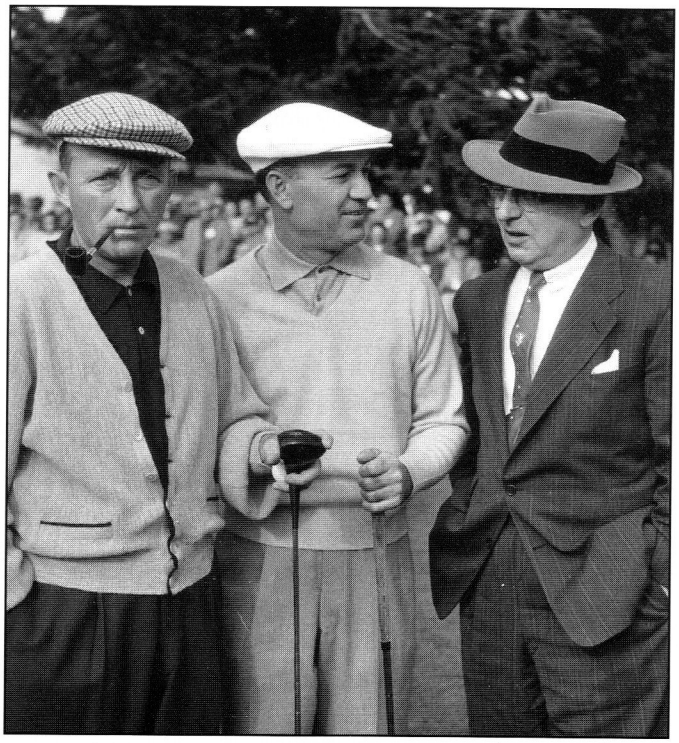
Now some people might think that Bing could have made a better choice to run his tournament, someone from the sports world, or a retired golfer perhaps. But Uncle Bing was a great believer in the family employment plan and he had worked closely with Larry since his early Hollywood days. They got along well with each other and had formed a bond of great trust and respect.

Considered old fashioned and ultra conservative, Uncle Larry wearing business suit and hat, stood out like a security guard in the crowd of casually dressed golfers. He might as well have been wearing a tuxedo, compared to the sporty togs of the duffers and spectators. Yet, that was Uncle Larry, he always looked the same. Having the title of *Tournament Director* was something he took seriously and I think he felt he should look the part of someone who was in charge of things.

And he certainly was.

In the early part of his career, Larry showed his literary skills by working for newspapers in Washington and Idaho. Then Bing recruited him to Hollywood. Larry seemed perfectly suited to just about any task that Bing set before him, he was Bing's ambassador, assistant, advance man and public relations guru. He gave his younger brother advice, support and protection. In order to get to Bing, you had to go through Larry.

Although Uncle Larry held important positions in the Crosby organization, when the media showed up with cameras, Larry was nowhere to be seen. He was actually a retiring sort of person who preferred to stay in the background and let the spotlight fall on Bing, where it belonged. It can be said that he wore many hats, and some of them were behind the scenes, unknown to the public. For example, during World War II, Larry became interested in putting together some camp shows for the military bases in California. Using Bing's connections at Paramount, Larry was able to borrow the red, white and blue costumes used in *Holiday Inn* for the dancers in his troupe. On occasion Bing would go along and sing a few numbers.



Larry Crosby (right) with Ben Hogan and Bing at Pebble Beach.

The show performances varied from camp to camp but would always include a comic, a magic act, singers and dancers. They traveled by bus and when Bing was on board, he usually would ask the driver to stop at the next liquor store. This was not to buy alcohol, but to purchase the Billboard or Hit Parade magazines so Bing could memorize the words to the new top ten songs of the month, as they rolled down the highway.

After he bought his Rising River ranch in northern California, he called Larry: "There's no medical facility up here, and if I am going to live here part-time, we need a hospital." Bing then asked Larry to put a show together to help raise money for the building project. Larry had become an agent, promoter and talent scout by

this time and had no trouble finding performers, especially when it was for Bing's hospital. Uncle Larry enlisted the services of his son Jack, a Hollywood set designer, to create the stage scenery. Phil Harris and his wife Alice Faye usually went along on these junkets, whenever Larry was planning stage shows for Bing. These were always good times, full of laughter and camaraderie, Larry made sure of that.

Bing also sent Larry to act on his behalf at the meetings of Crosby Music, a small publishing company which included the songwriters Burke and Van Heusen. This job put Larry in touch with many of the big names in the music industry, while wearing the hat of a song plugger.

Larry was an innovator, and is said to have given the Olympia Brewing Company of Washington State the idea for their Horseshoe Falls logo and slogan. "It's the Water". The brewery adopted this trademark and sent Larry ten cases of beer every month in thanks.

Bing called upon Larry to handle so many facets of his life, both business and personal, that I believe these two brothers were the closest of all.

I am very proud and fortunate to have had Larry as my uncle and godfather.

Carolyn Schneider

The Way We Were – Del Mar
It's the season that Bing Crosby loved most

We carried an article by Ron Bosley's niece, Diane Welch, in our last issue. Diane Welch is a freelance writer from Solana Beach, just north of San Diego, and she has again been busy writing about Bing. The following article appeared in the Union-Tribune on July 29.

"There's a smile on every face
and a winner in each race
where the turf meets the surf
down in old Del Mar."

At the start of each race day, crowds hear those words sung by a velvet-voiced Bing Crosby, a Hollywood personality synonymous with Del Mar Thoroughbred racing. It's a tradition that is part of the legend of the Del Mar Racetrack.

The tradition dates back to the track's opening day, July 3, 1937, when Crosby personally ushered attendees through the turnstiles. Fifteen thousand people witnessed Crosby's horse, High Strike, win that day, according to newspaper articles of the day.

The fascination with Crosby and the Hollywood elite who orbited his star attracted thousands trackside and made a huge success of what newspapers then touted as the "Jewel Box" track.

Today, Crosby fans are intent on keeping memories of the crooner alive.

The Del Mar opening day.

Ron Bosley, 84, of Britain is an avid Crosby fan. Since 1939, Bosley said, he has collected more than 2,500 photographs, 1,400 movie stills and 14 tabloid-size albums of newspaper and magazine clippings on Crosby. As archivist and photo editor for the 1,000-member International Club Crosby, Bosley said, he aims "to preserve as much interesting material on Crosby's life as possible."

Bosley's friend and fellow club member since 1979, Malcolm Macfarlane, who is editor of the club's BING magazine, culled much of this information to produce an 800-page book, "Bing Crosby: Day By Day," published in 2001 by Scarecrow Press Inc.

The book chronicles Crosby's life from his birth in 1903 to his death in 1977. Macfarlane said he wrote this book almost by accident, following the publishing of installments of an earlier Crosby chronicle.

"I thought this might be interesting to the readers of BING magazine, so I started adding to it," Macfarlane wrote in an e-mail.

The abundance of information eventually led to another book, "Bing Crosby, A Diary of a Lifetime," in which Crosby's Del Mar Turf Club years are documented.

Crosby had bought a ranch in Rancho Santa Fe in 1934; two years later, La Jolla resident William A. Quigley approached Crosby to form a racing syndicate.

The Del Mar Fairgrounds was under construction and could provide track facilities, according to Macfarlane's account. The Del Mar Turf Club became incorporated May 5, 1936.

Board members included Pat O'Brien, Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy and Gary Cooper. Quigley was director of racing, and Crosby was president. A 10-year lease was granted by the 22nd District Agricultural Association, the state agency that operates the fairgrounds.

When funds fell short to complete the grandstand and other structures, Crosby and O'Brien gave $600,000 to make up the difference. Buildings designed by San

Diego architect Sam Hamill were completed, and racing began.

Saturday morning radio shows were broadcast trackside, with Crosby often contributing commentary. Lavish dinner dances on Saturday evenings established Del Mar as a celebrity playground, Macfarlane wrote.

Aug. 12, 1938, marked the famed race of Seabiscuit against Crosby's Ligaroti. More than 20,000 fans witnessed Seabiscuit's narrow victory.

Dixie Lee, Crosby's first wife, presented a check of $25,000 to owner Charles S. Howard. Howard's son, Lindsay, was Crosby's horse-breeding partner in Binglin Stable and was also the namesake for Crosby's fourth son.

Crosby sold his interest in the Del Mar Turf Club in 1946 because of the "pressure of the many activities in which I am engaged," according to archived news reports.

More than six decades later, his name remains linked with the Del Mar Racetrack.

Diane Welch

(Editor: Nice publicity for Bing. I suggested to Diane that she might like to write about the Rancho Santa Fe golf tournament for the local San Diego papers too but Diane said that she had been asked not to write another Crosby feature for the time being! However, as we went to press I noticed another article by Diane, this time in the Rancho Santa Fe Review and on this occasion she also covers the golf tournament. Well done, Diane. Incidentally, the chronology of my two books is slightly out. Diary of A Lifetime came first and was followed by Day By Day some years later.)

Celluloid Crosby

Malcolm's find of a copy of "Metronome" from October, 1944 revived an issue I've pondered over for some time. It's about Johnny Mercer's contribution to *Rhythm on the Range* (1936).

Mercer devotes just one sentence to it in his "Metronome" article on Bing. He says: "...I wrote some songs for Bing's picture, *Rhythm on the Rang*e, which had "I'm an Old Cowhand" as one of the Crosby specialities." It was the first of several contributions he would make to Crosby films over the years. For the record, it was just the one song that Mercer managed to have placed in that film. Though he got that detail wrong the article was probably penned by Mercer rather than being ghosted. I believe he was the author because he recounts some early memories which are supported by what we know of Bing's early career. He then goes on to recall Whiteman violinist Matty Malneck taking him on a home visit to the Crosby home in 1935. He refers to Bing as "the greatest artist of them all." I believe that this is showbiz-speak. I doubt that Bing and Johnny were ever close although some books say that they were. They paid respect to each other in the entertainment arena but there was never a closeness that could be considered a true friendship. The team made some great recordings together for Decca and when they appeared on radio and television there was a warmth that seemed too genuine to be created solely for the benefit of the home audience. But all was not what it seemed.

"I'm an Old Cowhand" was one of the few songs for which Johnny Mercer wrote both words and music. He probably had an idea of the subject matter of Bing's forthcoming Paramount Picture *Rhythm on the Range* (1936) when he composed the song. Yet he did not approach Bing directly with the song. Instead he asked Fud Livingston if he would bring the song to Bing's attention. Livingston had been a saxophonist with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra when Bing sang with that band. Livingston subsequently progressed to arranger and he had contacts with Paramount. He was the bridge Mercer used to get a foothold in the Crosby/Paramount camp. Mercer's post "Metronome" memories of those early days were:

> "I met Crosby after I got to Hollywood. I admired Crosby and knew all about him before I joined the Whiteman band. While I was with the band I heard a lot of stories about Bing, and so one of the first things that happened when I got to Hollywood was that he asked me out to his house - Ginger (Mercer's wife) and I. And we got to be friends and then we made some records. He sang one of my first big songs in a movie, "I'm an Old Cowhand" and go me off to a good fine start in Hollywood.....I really think he saved my Hollywood career because I began to get some more offers after that."

All that is fairly consistent with the piece in "Metronome". What is not revealed in either account is that Crosby and Mercer were romantic rivals.

Gary Giddins tells us in his Crosby biography, "A Pocketful of Dreams", about Bing missing performing with Whiteman because of his drinking and womanising. Giddins tells us "the women they saw were chorus girls of which there was a limitless supply." One such chorus girl was Ginger Meehan. Bing and Ginger had an ongoing relationship starting in the summer of 1927. We now know of the extent of the Crosby-Mercer-Meehan triangle because when Ginger Meehan/Mercer died she left her personal papers with the Pullen Library at Georgia State University. They cover her friendship with Crosby and Mercer. Johnny courted her by letter, Bing by telegram. She seemingly kept every paper

communication from the two. The love letters from her eventual husband are personal to the point of being embarrassing whilst Bing's overtures are more pointed. For example, when Ginger was in Philadelphia Bing wired her from New York:

> ACCORDING TO US STATISTICS THERE ARE 7 MILLION PEOPLE HERE BUT WITHAL IM A STRANGER AND MISERABLY ALONE BECAUSE YOURE NOT ALONG UNDYING BEST REGARDS.....BING

Johnny Mercer and Bing

It must have been with some relief that Mercer could write to Ginger on 14th October, 1930: "I heard the other day that Bing had gotten married to Dorothy Lee." The field was now open to Johnny. He married Ginger on 8th June, 1931. It was not the happiest of marriages and although they were together until Johnny's death on 25th June, 1976, Ginger used Bing as a weapon to taunt her husband. When Mercer's biographer, Gene Lees, was trying to reason why Mercer was so often melancholy he wrote about the pleading love letters sent to Ginger when Bing was also a suitor. He concluded that Mercer's unhappiness was because Ginger tantalised him with the mention of other men "which apparently kept up, to judge by her evidently endless comparison of Mercer's position with the enormous success of Bing Crosby."

The Mercers were unable to have children. As a result they adopted a girl and then a boy. At one stage the Mercer's lived three doors down from the Crosby's. Daughter Mandy observed that her mother felt Johnny was a soft touch when friends approached him for a loan. Mandy recalls Ginger once saying, "If you lend money to this hanger-on, you're never going to see it again, and we're never going to be like the Crosbys." Adopted son Bill put it even more strongly when he said, "My mother hated Bing. Mom always maintained Bing was responsible for his wife Dixie drinking herself to death". A personal view, obviously, but perhaps providing an understanding as to why "I'm an Old Cowhand" was delivered to Bing by a third party. Ginger Mercer did not encourage Johnny's fraternising with the singer he admired.

That's more than enough about one song from the film. It's worth following the progress of the movie from conception to completion and beyond. Six months before it went in front of the cameras Paramount started to put into place Bing's supporting players. They wanted Frances Langford for the role eventually taken by Frances Farmer. Langford was under contract to M-G-M and terms regarding a loan out to Paramount were not agreed. This provided Farmer with a tremendous career boost when she was cast as Bing's leading lady. Unfortunately Farmer's alcohol and mental problems prevented her sustaining the fame which *Rhythm on the Range* brought.

The ill-fated Frances Farmer with Bing in Rhythm On The Range

For Bing's comic sidekick Paramount suggested Jack Oakie who was under contract to Paramount but currently on loan to Warner Bros. As we know the part

of Buck eventually went to Bob Burns. With four months to go before filming started, the studio announced the casting of two other prominent female parts: Gail Patrick and Elizabeth Patterson. Gail Patrick had been given decent roles in two earlier Crosby films: *Mississippi* (1935) and *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935) but she missed out on a third casting. She went on to play leading roles until the late 1940s. The part of Aunt Penny which was pencilled in for Elizabeth Patterson was given to Lucille Webster Gleason. Patterson specialised in playing kindly elderly ladies similar to those given to Lucille Gleason and the two could easily step into each others parts

A couple of musical stars-to-be made appearances in *Rhythm on the Range*. Leonard Slye was one of the singing group The Sons of the Pioneers before he went on to fame and fortune as Roy Rogers. And Louis Prima's brief appearance was born of a friendship with Bing which stemmed from their love of horse racing. Prima was a frequent attendee at the Del Mar racetrack and it was there that he was inspired to write "Sing, Bing, Sing". Bing said why not just call it "Sing, Sing, Sing" and give it universal appeal. Prima took Bing's advice and recorded the song in February of 1936. Two years later the song found legendary status when Benny Goodman performed at his Carnegie Hall concert.

The film was favourably reviewed by the popular press. They saw it for what it was - escapist entertainment which appealed to the masses. Of course, if your brief as a critic was to find unsophisticated fare unworthy of your readers then you tackled the film from a different perspective. The reviewer for The Hollywood Citizen News saw the film at a press showing a fortnight before its premiere. He lived in the movie capital of the world so he could not be too unkind. After all, his newspaper needed the advertising revenue. He blew both hot and cold when he wrote:

> "From where I sat behind an attitude of critical reserve, Bing Crosby's new picture *Rhythm on the Range* looked like a box office hit. As a screen play it is a slapdash piece, replete with absurdities, but nevertheless exceptionally diverting. I am glad to report further that it marks crooner Crosby's continued freedom from the Tin Pan Alley asinities he indulged in to such nauseating extremes several years ago. All his new numbers make pleasant listening".

Tin Pan Alley asinities? How far back is the guy going? Bing was beginning to make it big just a couple of years earlier when *Going Hollywood* featured at least three Crosby standards. Mack Gordon and Harry Revel wrote some great songs for the two films which followed: *We're Not Dressing* and *She Loves Me Not*. *Mississippi* from 1935 provided songs generally regarded as Rodgers and Hart evergreens. And Bing's film immediately preceding *Rhythm on the Range* was *Anything Goes* which comprised a score drawn from the talents of Cole Porter, Hoagy Carmichael and Leo Robin with Frederick Hollander. It is easy to see why our anonymous reviewer did not cite examples of the Tin Pan Alley asinities he had in mind.

Meanwhile, back in the U.K., Graham Greene was given the opportunity to review *Rhythm on the Range*. An equivalently inappropriate 21st century assignment would be to invite Vera Lynn to provide an opinion on the latest batch of heavy metal CD releases. Greene had this to say:

> "Bing Crosby as a cowboy; Bing Crosby crooning a prize bull to sleep on a freight car; Bing Crosby more than ever like Walt Disney's Cock Robin; it needs some stamina to be a film reviewer."

There are books devoted to highlighting cinematic inconsistencies. The continuity girl usually gets the blame. I wonder if she lost her job when the following two made it to the final release print of *Rhythm on the Range*? Near the film's opening we see Frances Farmer alighting from a taxi at her apartment at 632 Park Avenue. Later in the film when she is out west she sends a telegram to her Park Avenue apartment, now numbered 711. Miss Farmer is also seen in a sequence where she uses a car to chase Bing, who is on horseback. She takes a back seat in the car when the chase begins whilst two males are in the front of the vehicle. A subsequent shot shows her sharing the back seat with one of the males whilst the other one drives. It matters little because when you go to the cinema you have to suspend disbelief at the box office.

I often try to find a link between a film under the microscope in this column with a mention of its being used as the premiere attraction when a new cinema is opened. Unfortunately the only significant event I can find this time is not quite as celebratory. On 6th February, 1937 the Scala Cinema in Birkenhead programmed *Rhythm on the Range* supported by *Wings Over Africa*. The ex-mayor attended and performed a closing ceremony before the building was demolished. But as this was the buoyant 1930s as far as cinema going was concerned the site was used for the building of the Savoy, a super cinema which opened in October of the following year. The building of new cinemas in the U.K and North America peaked in the years leading up to World War Two. These happened to be golden years for Bing Crosby as far as motion pictures were concerned. In the second half of the 1930s you could see a new Crosby picture three times a year. Provided a "House Full" sign was not being displayed.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

SNUGGLED ON YOUR SHOULDER Song. A parody of this Joe Young-Carmen Lombardo was sung by Bing in the Sennett short *Sing, Bing, Sing* (1931). It ended the film as Bing flew off into the wild blue yonder with Florine McKinney. Between filming the short and its subsequent release, Bing visited the recording studio to make a straight version.

SNYDER, WILLIAM (1901-1984) Cinematographer. Colour photography was still in its infancy when Snyder photographed *Blue Skies* in 1945. Most films were shot in monochrome during the 1940s. Snyder was recognised by his peers for his skills with colour when he was nominated on three occasions for an Academy Award. Those shortlisted films were *Aloma of the South Seas* (1941), *The Loves of Carmen* (1948) and *Jolson Sings Again* (1949). The Technicolor richness of the latter will be well known to most. Disney appreciated Snyder's work and hired him for his live action features in the 1960s. As well as *Blue Skies*, Snyder shot the Technicolor Bob Hope film *The Princess and the Pirate* a year earlier. Bing made a gag appearance at the end of that one.

SO DO I Song. This was one of the quartet of songs that Johnny Burke and Arthur Johnston wrote for Bing to sing in *Pennies from Heaven* (1936). Bing recorded two versions for Decca to tie in with the film's release. The first version was recorded in July, 1936 when Georgie Stoll and his orchestra accompanied Bing. The following month Jimmy Dorsey's orchestra backed Bing when the song formed part of a "Pennies from Heaven" medley. Frances Langford duetted with Bing on this less frequently heard version which was issued as a 12 inch 78.

SO THE BLUEBIRDS AND THE BLACKBIRDS GOT TOGETHER Song. Featured by the Rhythm Boys in *King of Jazz* (1930), where it formed part of a medley with "Mississippi Mud". Rhythm Boy Harris Barris co-wrote the song with Billy Moll. It provided the world with the first ever opportunity to see Bing singing on screen and the film's two-colour Technicolor process made it a memorable introduction.

SOMEPLACE ON ANYWHERE ROAD Song. In *Riding High* (1950) Bing's prospective father-in-law tells our hero to dispose of the racehorse Broadway Bill. Rather than comply Bing quits his job and takes to the road with the horse and its stable lad Whitey, played by Clarence Muse. As they travel the two men sing the Burke-Van Heusen composition "Someplace on Anywhere Road".

SON OF PALEFACE Film. This was the follow up to *Paleface*, a 1948 box-office success for Bob Hope. In the 1952 sequel there is a prologue which features Bing. It bears no relationship to the old west comedy which follows. Bing is shown driving a car in a short scene (which was lifted from Bing's film *Just For You*) and Hope assures the audience that the old Paramount character actor will not feature in his picture. Maybe Bing agreed to the scene being used as a thank you to Hope for singing a few lines of "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" in *Son of Paleface.* That Bob Hope plug for the previous year's release *Here Comes the Groom* in which Bing sang the song was typical of the way in which the Hope-Crosby careers interacted about this time. Hope's version of "In the Cool..." occurs when his car breaks down so maybe he was having a dig at Bing.

SONDERGAARD, GALE [Edith Sondergaard] (1899-1985) Actress. As Catherine Vail in *Road to Rio* (1948) she played Dorothy Lamour's guardian. She was also the villainess of the piece. She had featured in the earlier Bob Hope comedy *My Favourite Blonde* (1942), in which Bing made a gag appearance. She was a sinister lady in that one as well. In fact, it could be said that sinister was her speciality, particularly when she smiled. At the time of filming *Rio* she was probably unaware that her acting career was about to be curtailed because of her left wing allegiances. Married at the time to director Herbert Biberman, one of the 'Hollywood Ten', she was regarded as being tarred by the same brush. She was off-screen for twenty years, returning in 1969 to appear in *Slaves.* Her career never recovered. An additional claim to fame is that she was the first actress to win an Oscar for "Best Actress in a Supporting Role" for *Anthony Adverse* (1936).

SONG OF FREEDOM Song. From the film *Holiday Inn* (1942), this Irving Berlin composition celebrated Independence Day. Bing performed it before a couple of Hollywood producers who have attended the Holiday Inn in order to decide whether or not to make a film about the venue.

SOON Song. Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers wrote this one for the film *Mississippi* (1935) and it has remained a Crosby favourite ever since. It was performed twice in the film and allowed Bing to demonstrate both his musical ability and his love of two women. Gail Patrick was the recipient of the first romantic overture, when Bing accompanied himself on piano. Later in the film Bing took his guitar onto the porch and let Joan Bennett know how he felt about her.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER Song. In Bing's brief appearance in *Pepe* (1960) he asks Pepe, played by Cantinflas, where he is from. Before Pepe can properly answer, Bing breaks into "South of the Border" and the Mexican actor joins him in a chorus of the Jimmy Kennedy-Michael Carr song. It was another five years before Bing made his first studio recording of the song when it was included on his set for the Longines

Symphonette Society.

SPARKS, NED [Edward A. Sparkman] (1883-1957) Vaudevillian who turned to acting in films. The rasping voiced sad faced comedian played in three Crosby pictures from the 1930s. He was way down the cast list as Lem Spawn in *Too Much Harmony* (1933) but later in the same year he was fourth billed as Jack Conroy in *Going Hollywood.* That substantial role cast him as the director of the film within a film. But it was necessary to wait until 1939 to see Sparks in a typical role in a Bing film. That was in *The Star Maker* when, as 'Speed' King, he played the children hating publicity officer of the singing newsboy troupe. His melancholy face said it all. He entered films in the silent era and more or less retired some ten years before his death, his last big screen appearance being in *Magic Town* (1947).

Ned Sparks in his Star Maker role

SPARKUHL, THEODOR (1891-1946) Director of photography. Sparkuhl arrived in Hollywood from Germany in 1933 and he was immediately offered employment by Paramount Pictures. He had been a director of photography since 1918 and Paramount knew of his talent. His name was on the credits of countless black and white features for that studio until the time of his death. *Too Much Harmony* (1933) and *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942) were his only assignments that had a Crosby involvement.

SPRING FEVER Song. Leo Robin and Harry Warren wrote this song for Bing to sing in *Just for You* (1952). The film was edited down to what was then a lengthy one and three quarter hours and the song was not used. The music can be heard in the background on the film's soundtrack but you had to wait until 1987 to buy the CD *Bing Sings Again* to hear Bing's previously unissued commercial recording and listen to Robin's lyric.

STACK, ROBERT (1919-2003) Actor. By the time he made *Mr. Music* with Bing in 1950, Robert Stack was well on the way to becoming a leading man in movies. As an athletic suitor vying for the affections of Nancy Olsen with Bing, he provides credible competition. He was in films from 1939 when he made his debut in *First Love* and gave Deanna Durbin her first screen kiss. His decade as a film star was the 1950s. He then moved into television where his starring role in "The Untouchables" brought him international fame. He continued appearing in cinema and television films through to the twenty-first century.

STAGECOACH Film. This 1966 Cinemascope release by 20th Century-Fox can be regarded as Bing's last 'proper' film. Bing didn't believe this to be the case at the time. In a 1966 interview he said:

> "In all the years I've made films I think the public has never thought of me as an actor. I don't believe the public has even thought of me as a singer. I'm Bing Crosby. I'm a personality...a citizen. That's fine, but now that I'm a little past getting the girl in the movie - we can't all be Cary Grant, you know - it's a little frustrating. If I'm not thought of as an actor I won't get character parts. That's why I'm so delighted with *Stagecoach.* I hope it will open a few doors for me. After all these years it's pretty hard to stop. When I'm away fishing I look at the papers and see where they're casting a picture and say, 'Why can't I get in that?' Besides, if you work a little it makes the other stuff - the fishing, hunting and so on - more fun."

Well, Bing didn't get character parts in Hollywood movies and Cary Grant decided to retire at the same time as Bing was filming *Stagecoach.* Perhaps Bing was too pernickety in what offers he would accept. Between *Stagecoach* and his death, well over a dozen films were linked to his name. When he declined to play the part of Columbo on television because the schedule would interfere with his golf it signified his retirement from Hollywood movies. He just forgot to make the decision public. The only mistake he made was to turn down Paramount's offer of casting him in the 1968 release of *Paint Your Wagon.* The part went to Lee Marvin. *Stagecoach* was not a comfortable shoot for Bing. During the two summer months of 1965 when he was on location in Colorado his bursitis was playing him up. The resultant discomfort might have assisted the pained look which was part of his Doc Boone characterisation in the film. Critics disliked the remake of *Stagecoach* because they felt compelled to compare it to the original John Ford directed version which starred John Wayne. In that one Doc Boone was portrayed by Thomas Mitchell. Leslie Halliwell described the Gordon

Douglas directed remake as an absolutely awful remake, but then Halliwell had little time for many films made after the end of the 1940s. There was a second remake in 1986. Bing's daughter, Mary Frances, appeared in that television version which cast country music performers in the main roles. Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings and John Schneider gave the small screen version novelty appeal if nothing else.

STAR MAKER, THE Film. Bing's role as Larry Earl in *The Star Maker* was inspired by the career of Gus Edwards, who was living in retirement when this Paramount picture went before the cameras in 1939. Edwards died at the age of 66 in 1945 and there are no documented comments of his views of the highly dramatised screenplay fashioned by Frank Butler, Don Hartman and Arthur Caesar. What cannot be contested is the contribution Edwards made to showbusiness by bringing Eddie Cantor, Ray Bolger and others to the attention of vaudeville audiences. He also co-wrote dozens of songs which once heard are hard to forget. The Edwards' songs which Bing sang in *The Star Maker* were "Jimmy Valentine", "If I was a Millionaire", "In my Merry Oldsmobile" and "Schooldays". The film's new songs were composed by Bing's regular movie songsmiths of the time: Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco. From the four songs they wrote for Bing the standout was "An Apple for the Teacher", which had the feel of an early twentieth-century ballad ideal for the Edwards/Earl stage act. Bing's task in *The Star Maker* was that of organising vaudevillian acts featuring his Newsboys - a troupe of child entertainers. Seven pre-teenagers were cast, with only one finding a lasting career in the movies. That was Darryl Hickman who was spotted by John Ford and immediately cast as one of the Joad children in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). Despite that promising start to his career Hickman never made it big-time although he kept fairly busy. *The Star Maker* is a little seen Crosby picture. It deserves fuller exposure as the review 'Variety' gave it in 1939 confirms: "A rollicking filmusical, first-class entertainment".

STAR NIGHT AT THE COCOANUT GROVE Short. This 18 minute Colortone musical shot and released in 1935 has several points of interest. It provides footage of the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, where the Cocoanut Grove night club was situated. The Cocoanut Grove had played an important part in Bing's developing career.

Despite the Colortone tag, the film was shot in sumptuous Technicolor with Natalie Kalmus supervising the comparatively new process.

It was produced by Louis Lewyn, who had provided Paramount with candid shots of Hollywood stars off duty for his *Hollywood on Parade* series. Mary Pickford, who introduces Bing in *Star Night*, was a regular feature of those shorts.

Bing sang "With Every Breath I Take" in the film, with piano accompaniment by Ted Fio Rito. M-G-M distributed the short and if the recommendation to renters from the reviewer of 'Film Daily' was heeded it should have padded out several 'full supporting programmes'. The critic wrote: "This musical review is a grand buy for any showman. Gorgeously produced, with smartness, class and snap."

STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM Film. Bing's guest appearance in this "all star" Paramount production from 1942 was a spliced in rendition of "Old Glory". That was a Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen composition which never benefited from a Crosby studio recording. The film was the first of several Paramount attempts to cram as many as its contract players into a feature with a slender plot and hope that the fans would shell out to see their favourite stars. They did and *Star Spangled Rhythm* made the box-office top ten for 1943. One boost at the box-office was provided by Frank Sinatra who spent the first month of 1943 on stage at the New York Paramount theatre as featured singer with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. It was probably the Sinatra fans who brought traffic to a standstill rather than the on-screen feature *Star Spangled Rhythm.* Readers of James Agee's review in 'Time' magazine knew exactly what to expect when you bought tickets at their neighbourhood cinemas. He summed the film up as "A variety show including everyone at Paramount who was not overseas, in hiding or out to lunch."

All about Bing

Several radio stations and many newspapers highlighted the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing. UK members such as Barry Sandercock, Ian Lawrence and H. Woodcock had letters published. There were several good articles about Bing in the media by people such as Mark Steyn and Peter Sheridan. One we particularly liked in the UK was by our good friend, broadcaster Paul Barnes, which appeared on the Kettering Evening Telegraph web site on October 12. We thought we'd share it with you.

First, there is the matter of his name. There never was a Bing before he came along. His proper name was Harry Lillis Crosby. He and his boyhood chums were fans of a hillbilly comic paper called "The Bingville Bugle" and Harry became known as "Bingo from Bingville". Then the "o" was dropped, and bingo! we got Bing. He was about six at the time.

Then there is the matter of his date of birth. Throughout his life he insisted that it was May 2, 1904, and the world believed it. He was actually born on May 3, 1903, but this was confirmed only after he died. In his teens in Spokane, Washington, he played drums in an amateur band that listened over and over again to the

latest jazz records, memorising every note. He was a drummer first, a singer only as an afterthought. But it was as a singer that he decided to become a professional, teaming up in 1925 with Al Rinker, another of the boys in the band. They went on the road as "Two boys and a Piano". Bing told his mother "I'd rather sing than eat". Fortunately, he and Al managed to do both and in 1926 were heard by the hugely successful (and hugely built) Paul Whiteman who offered them work with his band. They signed and arranged to join him later that year.

On October 18, 1926, Bing and Al made their first ever recording, an uncredited performance of 'I've got the girl' with Don Clark's Biltmore Hotel Orchestra. It was not a success and vanished from the catalogue. The small number of copies that did sell aged on the shelves, unplayed. In 1952 a Crosby collector found a copy in San Francisco and Bing confirmed its authenticity.

Once with Whiteman the pair was joined by Harry Barris and the three became the "Rhythm Boys", performing with the orchestra on stage, records, radio and film. Bing shone out with the combination of that rich voice and an instinctive sense of swing. He also knew exactly how to use the newest instrument in the musician's arsenal, the microphone. In 1931 he went solo, becoming the most successful recording artist of the 20th century. In a career which covered 51 years he had well over 300 hits, 38 of them reaching the number one spot. He also had 22 official Gold Records. At one time his weekly radio programme, broadcast coast to coast, had 50 million listeners every week, almost half the population of America.

GIs, MPs and a photographer surround Bing and a member of his USO troupe as they arrive at Hitcham in 1934.

On his Christmas show in 1934 he sang 'Silent Night', the start of a broadcasting tradition which went on for 43 years. The following year he was persuaded to record it, but only on condition that the royalties went to the St Columban Foreign Missionary Society. For millions world-wide Bing's recording of 'Silent Night' became an essential part of Christmas alongside trees, tinsel, mince pies and pudding. Between 1939 and 1945 it was an especially potent song for families and friends parted by war.

In wartime Bing made a ten-day tour of US bases in England, including Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. On the afternoon of Sunday, September 3, he put on a show at the 4th Strategic Air Depot at Hitcham, an extension of Wattisham air base. Sadly for Suffolk, Bing sang only for American service men and women who were bussed in from miles around.

Those East Anglian locals who were denied the chance to see Bing in the flesh had plenty of opportunities to enjoy him on radio. The BBC was constantly urged by listeners to play yet more Bing. A wartime report prepared for the BBC suggested that all popular vocalists should try to match the standards set by Mildred Bailey, Dinah Shore and Bing. Crooners were favoured generally, according to BBC research, because "they help us to learn the words of the songs".

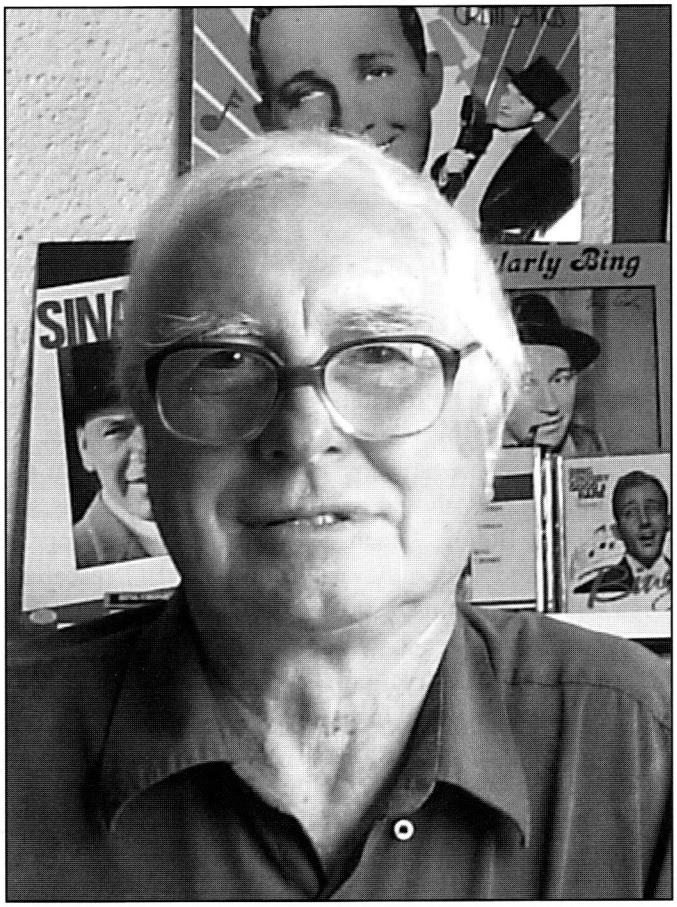
Stan White first encountered the sound of Bing just as war became a distinct prospect. He was six years old, and sitting under the living room table. "I could hear the people talking, and the wireless would be on, and I heard this song, 'When Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby', about deep blue sky, stars, that sort thing, and that appealed to me as a child."

In the war years, turning teenager, he was conscious of Crosby again. "It was one Sunday teatime," he recalls, "and again the radio was on. Bing came on. He was singing 'Home on the range' and I thought yeah, this is good. And then the BBC announcer said 'Well, that's so good I'm going to turn over to the other side.' And it was 'Brother, can you spare a dime?'"

Stan, who lives at Rothwell, later became an authority on Bing's recordings and wrote the notes for various CD releases. He and Crosby often corresponded and in 1960 they met at Claridge's Hotel. "And of course Kathryn, his second wife, was with him too," says Stan. They talked of recent recordings and how Bing was aiming to adjust his work schedule, "trying to wind it down a bit", as he put it. It was apparent to Stan that this was a different person from the one in the movies. "I realised I was talking to Harry Lillis Crosby, very friendly, but not quite the Bing Crosby you saw on the screen. You were talking to the real person."

The man you saw on the screen, Bing had been in pictures since 1930 when he appeared with Paul Whiteman's orchestra in *King of Jazz*. During his movie career he was in a total of 104 films as both singer and actor. In 1944 he picked up an Academy Award for his

performance as Father O'Malley in *Going My Way*. But probably the best-remembered films are the "Road" comedies he made with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour, starting with *Road to Singapore* in 1940, ending seven pictures later in 1962 with *The Road to Hong Kong* which was made in London. The general opinion of this last was that it was a road too far, a rutted track with a feeble script – and Joan Collins.



Stan White at home with his Bing collection.

It was during the making of *The Road to Hong Kong* that they encountered a pipe-smoking lady harpist, puffing away on a fill of St Bruno in the studio orchestra. Bing and Bob thought they'd seen everything – until then. The story comes from Jack Parnell, the one-time musical director for the Palladium Show, now retired to the Suffolk seaside. He worked with Bing on a couple of television shows.

"The thing that impressed me," says Jack, "was his beautiful shoes, highly polished, perfect leather, hand-made, and a bit cracked. You could see that they'd been beautifully cared for and that they were very old." These shoes were on the feet of one of the richest men in the world, but Bing could be cautious about money.

"He didn't like to waste it," Jack recalls, "There was no doubt about that. He wrote and said he wanted me to book a band for him for a tour. He said 'We'll have four trumpets, four trombones, and all the rest'. And then I get another letter a few days later: 'I don't think we need quite as many trumpets. Let's cut it down to two trumpets and a trombone'. And then you get another letter saying 'I don't think we need the trombone …' I had three letters like this, and eventually I gave up." The tour was abandoned.

Ah, but when they did work together? "Easy, so easy it was unbelievable," says Jack. "You just conducted and he sang. And he didn't worry if it wasn't quite the right tempo; he sang it anyway, perfectly. I remember getting a tempo entirely wrong, miles too slow for him. And he sang it. I said afterwards 'I'm sorry about that'. He just said 'Ah, that's alright'. He was so relaxed, he was almost relaxed to the point of inertia. He was just an ordinary guy, no side, no nothing. He was so big-time it didn't matter."

In May 1942 Bing went to the Decca studios in Los Angeles for a session to record songs from his latest film, *Holiday Inn*. Since Bing's days with Paul Whiteman he was known as "One take Crosby" so it took only 18 minutes to record what became a genuine classic, Irving Berlin's 'White Christmas' which was to overtake even 'Silent Night' as an essential sound of the festive season. It was a perfect and properly sentimental expression of the longings of millions who were separated from each other by the onset of war, and millions bought it. It was right for its time, but it's remained right for every Christmas since.

Bing had a passion for golf, escaping to the course as often as he could. He established the first celebrity pro-am golf championship and raised millions for charity. He recorded both of the two best songs ever written about the game, 'Tomorrow's my lucky day' and 'Straight down the middle', conveying a combination of the rueful and the triumphant in the way that only a true golfer could.

On October 14, 1977 he was in a foursome on the course at La Moraleja in Spain. They had just played the 18th hole and all agreed that it had been a good game. He and his partner had won ten dollars. Bing suddenly fell to the ground. His companions thought he had only missed his footing and slipped, but it was a heart attack and he died shortly afterwards.

Three days before that final game he had been in London, recording for the BBC. One of the songs laid down that day was a jaunty number which contained a line seeming to sum up a career that lasted over half a century, and produced over 2,000 records. Bing sings "I'm a vocal gadabout". The title says the rest: 'There's nothing I haven't sung about'. Just so.

© Paul Barnes

Paul Barnes presents *Gold for Grownups* each Saturday evening 18.00 until 21.00 (GMT) on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk or tune in to:

BBC Radio Cambs	95.7 and 96.0 FM
BBC Radio Essex	95.3 and 103.5 FM
BBC Radio Norfolk	95.1 and 104.4 FM
BBC Radio Northampton	103.6 and 104.2 FM

BBC Radio Suffolk 95.5 and 103.9 and 104.6 FM. The programme for October 13 included a wonderful appreciation of Bing and please see *Bing On The Box* for further details.

Stan White was featured in a separate article in the Kettering Evening Telegraph the same weekend so Bing's anniversary certainly got some publicity in Northamptonshire in the UK.

Another UK member who had a feature about him and Bing's anniversary was **Arthur Blood** of Derby. Arthur (now 82) described hearing Bing singing 'Constantly' as his Warwick plane flew over the English Channel in 1944 looking for crashed pilots. "His voice was so smooth, it made you feel as though everything was going to be all right. Listening to 'Constantly' always makes me think back to that moment."

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Nicholas Morrison, Leeds, Yorkshire, UK (by email)

Please can I ask do you have any contact with Geoff Milne and if so, is it possible that the first recording of "That Old Black Magic" from the *Feels Good* sessions will ever be issued? My memory was that it was in a Latin rhythm and that it got out on Radio 2 shortly after it was recorded. My only concern is that it does not become lost. I recall it was Bing's rejection of this that led to the extra session and the other recording being issued.

(Editor: I have spoken to Geoff and he confirms the facts as Nicholas remembers them. Geoff wasn't too sure about the quality of the first version of the song and played an acetate of it to Bing. Bing also was not happy with the recording and asked that a further session be arranged to re-do it. Obviously, it wasn't worth setting up a session for just one track so "What's New?" "At Last" and "I'm Gettin' Sentimental Over You" were added. Sadly, Geoff feels that the original version of "Old Black Magic" has probably been wiped from the tapes and he feels that it will never be issued.)

Keith Parkinson, St. Helens, UK

BING 146 met your usual high standard. The front and back covers were particularly striking. Jon Oye deserves congratulating especially as his article "Bing: an Upfront Guy" was well researched. Much of the magazine's strength is now the depth of research that goes into covering niche aspects of Bing's career. Martin McQuade is another good seeker of facts. I thought that he had unearthed a lot of new information about Bing's film career with "Adventures of a Ballad Hunter". I've bought writings and recordings collected by John and Alan Lomax but I did not know the background relating to Bing portraying Lomax senior on film. It seems that Bing was also unaware of the project!

I hope that Greg Van Beek follows the lead provided by the Lennon Sisters and manages an interview with Norma Zimmer. We could learn a lot about Bing's recording studio attitudes and techniques from his Decca days if her memory holds up.

As you'd expect, I've put in an order for the "Going My Way" book. I ordered a dictionary at the same time. It will no doubt help me through Chapter 4 of the book: "Apatheia, masculine desire and the films of Bing Crosby".

Is there anyway we can squeeze a little more publicity for Bing via the Guinness Book of Records from the long running Chronological series? I know of no other CD project that will exceed the eventual 50 plus discs.

(Editor: I duly suggested to John McNicholas that we approach the Guinness Book Of Records but he asked us not to do so. We shall respect his wishes.)

Robert Sarbo, as quoted on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum.

In the "A to Z of Bing's Films" there is an entry on Robert Shayne who was in *Welcome Stranger* with Bing. The writer says there is not much more to be said about the actor. Perhaps the writer never saw "The Adventures Of Superman" which ran on TV from 1951-57 and has been seen in reruns somewhere ever since. Sounds like a case for Inspector Henderson?

Robert Shayne (far left) as Roy Chesley in Welcome Stranger

Shayne also appeared with Abbott and Costello in their last film as a team *Dance With Me Henry* in 1956

and crossed swords with Al Jolson's alter ego Larry Parks in *The Swordsman* in 1947. One more note on Robert Shayne. Like Larry Parks, Shayne's career suffered because of the blacklist. While he continued to act off and on, he turned to selling insurance, stocks and bonds, and mutual funds.

Shayne always called acting with Bing in *Welcome Stranger* one of the high points of his career.

Steven Lewis, as quoted on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum.

Although *Welcome Stranger* is one of my favorite Bing movies, in which Bing offered to take Robert Shayne's temperature "on the house," when I think of Shayne I always think first of Inspector Henderson from *The Adventures of Superman*. Probably the Brit compiler of the Shayne entry in BING never saw the Superman series, which ran from 1951-57 on American television. Production ended only as a result of the suicide of its Superman star, George Reeves. Shayne served with Ronald Reagan, when Reagan was still a liberal Democrat, on the board of the Screen Actors Guild. Perhaps his union activities led to his investigation by Congress in the early 1950s for "unamerican activities" but nothing came of it. This did not affect his continuing role on *The Adventures of Superman* and he continued to work in movies and TV until two years before his death at age 92 in 1992. In total he appeared in more than 100 movies.

(Editor: Keith Parkinson responds:
"The additional information on Robert Shayne provided by Ronald Sarbo and Steven Lewis is welcome. The Adventures of Superman was not shown in my part of the UK and I was unaware of the impact Shayne made on US television. The A-Z of Bing's films is regularly updated as new information comes to light. Any amendments received with thanks.)

John Bignell, Wembley, Middlesex, UK

Many thanks for the latest BING. As usual it makes fascinating reading.

I loved the story about Bing's response when a well meaning fan approached him on the golf course anfd enquired if he (Bing) played golf often. "Only in daylight hours" was our man's response.

As for Dorothy Lamour and *Dixie* reviewed by Keith Parkinson in his usual forthright style, this gave me the biggest laugh I've had for some time.

I don't know if I've told you before but I buy all my compact discs (except the Jonzos) from "The Compact Disc Club" at 6 The Arcade, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 1LH – tel. 01243 842615. They are unfailingly helpful and their prices are <u>always</u> cheaper than anyone else. Furthermore they do not charge anything for postage – that's right! Free delivery to your door.

Cyril Stansfield, Batley, West Yorkshire, UK

Anybody now in their seventies who tuned into BBC Radio Two on Sunday August 5th to listen to Malcolm Laycock's presentation of the Dance Bands and the Swing Bands, would have heard a rare Bing Crosby item, accompanied by an orchestra – the British Band of the AEF directed by Regimental Sergeant Major George Melachrino.

As I remember it, this is the recording of Bing Crosby's first live broadcast on the then titled BBC "Forces Programme". It was Wednesday, August 30, 1944. A continuity announcer came on the air and said, "This is the BBC Forces Programme. In a few minutes, we are taking you over to hear Bing Crosby's first radio broadcast for the BBC."

On the recording used by Malcolm Laycock, we heard Bing's first song announced, "For his first song, Bing Crosby will sing "I'll Be Seeing You". Bing also sang "Swinging On A Star" and he concluded with "With A Song In My Heart". As we know, Bing recorded "I'll Be Seeing You" earlier in 1944. However, the wartime Brunswick 78s were rare (and the most expensive the store had) and they did not reach our shores until they had been on the market some time. Bing's version of "I'll Be Seeing You" was not released in the UK until October 1944 so we were hearing this song for the very first time and hanging on to every word of the lyric.

I can tell you from my own meagre song writing attempts that to take a chance and put a new expression in a song, whilst being a risk, when performed it sticks out like a sore thumb! Mentioning the places, Bing sang, "In that small cafe, The park along the way, *The children's carousel* (we thought, "What's a carousel? – we'd never heard that expression before!). A few days later, a national daily paper mentioned the broadcast, commenting on that line people were curious about, *The children's carousel* explaining it was a children's roundabout.

I remember thinking during the broadcast, "Bing sounds to be singing a bit higher."

George Melachrino, who accompanied Bing, had an excellent pedigree, having mastered saxophone, clarinet and violin; he was an excellent arranger and a more than competent vocalist. It was Carroll Gibbons who paid for George Melachrino's singing lessons, so Bing was in very capable hands for his first BBC live broadcast.

Richard Joyce, Brampton, Ontario, Canada

Greetings for you from Toronto, Canada. I am a transplanted Brit from Bartley Green, Birmingham along with most of my family. We moved here some years ago and still have relations in Worcester, Guernsey and the greater West Midlands area.

To cut the story short, I am trying to find a recording by Bing Crosby done during the war called "Hello Mom." My mother, Lucy Joyce (nee Chadwick), 85, and living here with us, would love to hear this song played

again. I have tried with various old time radio stations but no one seems to have or know about it! Who else should I turn to but the Bing Crosby fan club? My mother grew up and lived in Aston (yes, we were Villa fans) along with her four brothers and my dad Jack. All through the war years and beyond, they were all Crosby fans.

My mother's youngest brother, "Uncle George," served in the Royal Navy on destroyers. He was on the Murmansk run and was torpedoed several times. He served on the famous "HMS Petard" which was one of the ships involved in capturing the Enigma machine. He had a rough time, as did many, but he could sing a bit in the Crosby style and he was a real character. Anyway he was chosen by Home Forces Radio transmitting from his ship one Christmas to choose a song to be played to his family back home, specifically to his mother. He chose "Hello Mom" by Crosby, the whole family was notified and they all gathered round to listen. You can imagine what that meant to them – wartime, the family all over the place and four sons away from home. My mother was closest to Uncle George who passed away some years ago, and it would mean so much for her to hear that song played again especially now as she is experiencing ill health herself. If you can help me in finding a copy or pointing me in the right direction I would be most grateful.

(Editor: Michael Crampton duly passed the request on to Wig and hopefully Richard now has a copy of the song)

Eddie McGinley, Dublin, Ireland

Many thanks for the summer issue of BING magazine. It is the usual high quality production and a credit to all involved. I'm amazed at the amount of information contained in each one, a labour of love I expect.

I recently received a B.A. Degree and the subject of my thesis was Bing Crosby. It was very well received by the examiners and one even suggested that I extend it into book form. I was surprised and very pleased but wouldn't consider myself a threat to Gary Giddins or Norman Wolfe!

Michael Collins, Florida, USA

This is just a quick note to tell you how much I enjoyed the two "Good & Rare" CDs which you recently brought out. Beautifully produced by the way. I suppose that it is inevitable at this juncture that you won't be skimming the cream off the top of the churn. Yet, a few prize finds did emerge. The various French songs will be new to many people and I here include those from that excellent "Little Boy Lost" film. Also, the very elusive "Jim, Johnny and Jonas." If my memory serves me rightly, this number had the double distinction of never having been transferred on to vinyl, let alone compact disc. Strange, as it really is a fine Crosby record.

Alan Matheson, Vancouver, Canada

Just wanted to send you a letter of congratulations and thanks for your producing the "Good And Rare" CDs on Sepia. I am mid way through listening to Volume One (looking forward to Volume Two) as part of my seven nights of listening to Bing in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of his passing. These discs are just great from the standpoint of choice of material. In light of the fact that the Jonzo series may be discontinued before the end of Bing's Decca contract, you've done all of us Bing fans a great service. Given that Bing's voice underwent a rejuvenation during the years covered by these discs (to my ears at least), I hope that they get lots of radio play by stations reluctant to play "pre-tape" Bing other than "White Christmas". I've just finished listening to Bing's rendition of "Ohio" which makes me wish he'd recorded other Leonard Bernstein "Broadway" material like "Some Other Time". I'm amazed to hear how great how great Bing's voice sounds on all these tracks!

(Editor: The Good & Rare CDs have certainly been appreciated and we owe a huge debt of thanks to Richard Tay of Sepia. The plan at present is for Sepia to continue the Chronological series under a different name. See Keeping Track.)

Graham Pascoe, NSW, Australia.

I've re-read BING No. 146 and decided to send a response to Jon Oye's 'up-front' article. Here's an incomplete list of Australian magazines which featured

pictures of Bing on their front covers, which I came across while researching for my forthcoming book in Bing and Aussie entertainment. They're in chronological order.

Tempo (A sometimes monthly, sometimes bimonthly music magazine), November 1940. Four cover photos from *Road to Singapore*.

Sporting Weekly, July 1943. Photo captioned 'Sporting Weekly's complete life story of Bing the groaner'.

The ABC Weekly (A weekly magazine with details of radio programs and related articles), 28 August 1943. Photo, with a full page article inside on page three, 'The story of Bing Crosby'.

Tempo November 1944. Photo captioned 'Paramount's "Going My Way" stars Bing Crosby'.

Picturegoer ('The national film weekly'), 1 April 1950. Photo captioned 'Bing Crosby goes to the races'. Inside there was a two-page article with pictures on *Riding High*, which opened the following month at Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre.

Tempo September 1950. Photo captioned 'Bing, of the Crosby legend'.

People, 13 August 1952. Photo of Bing, hatless and without toupee, captioned 'Bing Crosby, the road to riches'. Inside there was a four-page article on Bing's career including 'baldness doesn't worry him'.

Record Guide (A fortnightly, then monthly record magazine), November 1955. Photo captioned 'Bing Crosby still tops'.

Good Weekend (Supplement to The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper), 2 February 1991. Photo of Bing with Eddie Condon and a Sydney resident taken in New York in 1946.

The Weekend Australian Review (Supplement to the national newspaper The Weekend Australian), 22-23 December 2001. Photo of Bing and small insets of Elvis Presley and Perry Como, captioned 'Oh, Carol. What went wrong with Christmas music?' with a tongue-in-cheek article on Christmas songs inside.

As you can see, Bing was indeed 'an up-front guy down under'. There would have been many other examples also.

My copies of BING only go back to number 125 so I can't look at the first article on the subject in number 109 which may have included the following (which I found reproduced in *The Crosby Voice* of April 1982):

American Classic Screen, Volume 3, No. 2. Photo of Bing captioned 'Bing—A last interview', with a five-page article inside on Bob De Flores' meeting with Bing on 28 July 1977.

(Editor: Jon Oye is carefully collating all the information about Bing on the front cover of magazines for publication in due course.)

Zing a Little Zong: a Profile of Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires

October, 2007: seventy five years ago *The Big Broadcast* premiered; fifty years ago *The Edsel Show*, with Crosby heading an all-star cast, ushered the age of video tape-delayed broadcasting, and Bing and Kathryn were wed; thirty years ago Bing's sensational talent was stilled in Spain.

This month also marks another Crosby milestone; Sixty years ago, on October 1st, 1947 the first ever tape-produced show was aired. Audiences tuned to Philco Radio Time on that watershed Wednesday night heard a crystal clear transcription, one which would revolutionize broadcasting. They were also treated to something else entirely new, the heralding of a new vocal group Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires. When they sang 'My Heart is a Hobo', one of the most extensive collaborations of Crosby's career began.

The Rhythmaires launched an association on that date which would continue for almost a decade in over 230 broadcasts, over forty recordings (including one million-seller, 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People'), and a motion picture classic. They even helped sell Minute Maid.

To prepare for this essay a compilation was made of the hundreds of Crosby/Rhythmaires collaborations. This process underscored a vast repertoire astounding in its variety: from the velvety textures of 'The Loneliness of Evening' to the contrapuntal delights of 'Them There Eyes'.

The Rhythmaires weekly presence surrounding Crosby helped create a freewheeling mood at the start of each show, and enhanced the beauty of his ballads. The group embroidered and cushioned his sound with an idiosyncratic style. It was a dynamic blend ship.

The good natured fun they all shared was palpable. The asides he made to the group were priceless. A favorite example: at the conclusion of 'If' on The Chesterfield Show of April 25th, 1951, a prolonged coda of ooohhs and dooohs compels Bing to say, "Finish yet, will ya. Oh what a long ending, that's the longest ending in history, wasn't it? Thank you very much anyhow, kids."

The Rhythmaires, with Conlon at the helm, and John Scott Trotter (except for rare exceptions) wielding the baton, faced an intensive workload with Crosby. They were also frequently asked to complement Crosby's stellar duets. They were certainly up to the task. The members of the quintet, the elite of the era's studio and session singers, had each been primed for the challenge of working regularly with radio's top musical personality.

Apprenticeship on the Campus

In 1945, the Kay Kyser band was at its peak. One of its main attractions was The Campus Kids, which Jud Conlon joined that July. His debut recording with them was 'Choo Choo Polka' and 'That's for Me'. The other Kids were Diane Pendleton, Donna Wood, Loulie Jean Norman, and Charlie Parlato.

The Campus Kids were identified with many Kyser classics such as 'The Old Lamplighter' and the number one hit 'Ol' Buttermilk Sky' (both with Mike Douglas). When Donna Wood suddenly died in 1947 from a heart ailment, her sister Gloria replaced her. She fronted The Campus Kids on the number one hit 'The Woody Woodpecker Song', 'Managua, Nicaragua', and 'There Ought to Be a Society'.

Conlon was born in Cuba City, Wisconsin in 1910. This musical wunderkind, trained on the accordion and as a vocal arranger and conductor, had always dreamed of a mixed-gender jazz choir which could serve as a rhythm section in dialogue with the instruments; sort of an orchestral alter ego. This goal could be achieved in part by the incorporation of a glossary of intricate wordless accents. This was in vogue in many singing groups, but in The Campus Kids, Conlon was exposed to two singers who, with their four octave range and perfect pitch, could considerably advance his concept: Loulie Jean Norman and Gloria Wood. With gifts from the Gods such as these, and his basso profundo, Conlon felt that he could achieve unprecedented sonorities and hair trigger harmonies; sounds that could be either codeine flavored or adrenalin rushing. With their elasticity of vocal ranges, the five singers could sometimes sound double that size.

They agreed to join him. He would assign to himself the baritone part, Norman first or lead soprano, and Wood second soprano. Charlie Parlato accepted first tenor. He needed one more ingredient: a second tenor.

An Extramural Discovery

Conlon's search led him to Six Hits and a Miss; a group cited by Mel Torme in Fred Hall's 'Dialogues in Swing' as a major influence: the first vocal group used within a band as an alternate sax section. (The Mel Tones would also serve as a model for Conlon's group) He was particularly impressed with one of the Hits, Mac McLean, who was also a guitarist of note.

In addition to McLean, the other Hits were Marvin Bailey, Bill Seckler, Tony Paris, Lee Gotch and arranger Vince Deegen. The Miss was Pauline Byrnes.

The Six Hits and a Miss were regulars on The Bob Hope Show for Pepsodent from 1938 to 1943. In 1940 they had a cameo in *If I Had My Way* in which they sang 'April Played the Fiddle' with Crosby. The team went on to appear in a string of successful films such as *Down Argentine Way*, *Ziegfeld Girl*, *The Big Store*, and *Sun Valley Serenade.* In February, 1944 they recorded 'On the Atchison, Topeka, and the Santa Fe' with Bing.

Soon, McLean and another Hit were in the army, causing the group to become The Four Hits and A Miss. (it was in this incarnation that they accompanied Crosby and Jane Wyman on 'In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening' and 'Misto Cristofo Columbo'). Following World War Two, McLean dubbed voices for the movies (he supplied the voice for Oscar Levant in the 'By Strauss' number in *An American in Paris*). In 1947 Conlon recruited him for his nascent ensemble.

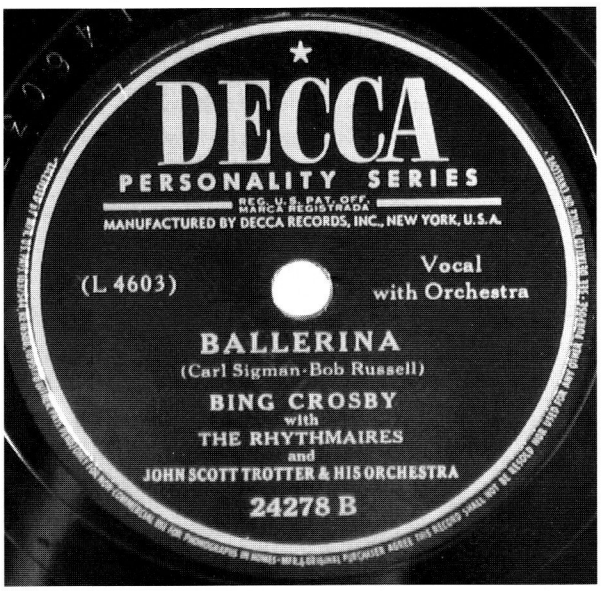
A Sound is Born

It is unknown if the formation of the team was hastened by a specific event; namely the sudden departure of The Charioteers as Crosby's weekly vocalists toward the end of the first Philco season in March, 1947. Several of the first season's final shows featured an unknown chorus which may have been formed by elements from the still unnamed group.

Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires was christened and ready to fill the void as transcriptions for the second season commenced that September. Conlon, Parlato, McLean and Norman bade farewell to The Campus Kids in December. (Gloria Wood remained with Kyser into 1948. She was featured, along with Babbitt, on two of the band's final smash successes, 'On a Slow Boat to China' and 'Saturday Date'.) The undergraduates had enrolled in postgraduate studies with Professor Crosby.

Bing and The Rhythmaires

The Rhythmaires settled into their broadcast groove, and Crosby was so impressed, he asked them to join him on record. On December 3rd, 1947 they joined him at the Decca studios in Los Angeles for a romping beguine entitled 'Ballerina'. This would be the first of over forty songs waxed with Crosby, heading a remarkably varied list: 'How it Lies', 'Home Cookin', 'Bibiddi-Bobiddi-Boo', 'The Teddy Bear's Picnic', 'It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas', 'Zing a Little Zong', 'Road to Bali', to name just a few.



Specialty numbers were offset by more austere selections and for some of these The Rhythmaires would be expanded into either The Jud Conlon Singers (i.e. 'Stay Well', 'Sorry') or The Jud Conlon Choir (i.e. 'The Loneliness of Evening', 'More I Cannot Wish You', 'We Meet Again'.) The Rhythmaires' final recordings with Crosby were made in April, 1956, for the Decca LP 'Songs I Wish I Had Sung'.

The Rhythmaires also furnished background vocals for Crosby in Walt Disney's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, released in 1949. The eerie sounds generated in 'The Headless Horsemen' have been tingling the spines of children ever since.

When Crosby brought the Philco Show to New York in the spring of 1948 for a four-week stint The Rhythmaires did not travel with him and were temporarily replaced by The Skylarks (known as The Velvetones and The Blue Moods until they were given their name by Crosby when they recorded with him in 1947.)

The Rhythmaires remained with Crosby throughout his Chesterfield series (each week they would sing the cigarette's 'Sound Off' jingle). Additionally, the group sang on Bing's Welcome Back to Baseball show, aired April 19th, 1950.

From time to time other singers pinch-hit for — or were added to — the team. Marie Green's soprano voice is memorable on 'Changing Partners'. Marie Green and Her Merry Men was a popular aggregation in the early forties. She was also a first rate movie voice-over artist, heard in *Carousel* and *South Pacific*. Another backbencher Rhythmaire was comic B actress Viola Vonn, leading lady of The Bowery Boys classic, *Paris Playboys*. She, too, was a movie-dubber, most notably in *The Seven Little Foys*. Clark Yocum of The Pied Pipers would also be called upon for relief as the need arose.

With the inroads television was making into network radio, Crosby's show had to be downsized, causing the group's exit in the spring of 1953 after the first season of The General Electric Show. Gone were the glorious harmonies, languorous backgrounds, and infectious exuberance which had infused Crosby's varied weekly selections. (They paid one final radio visit to Bing, on The GE Christmas show of December 20th, 1953.)

The remarkable Rhythmaires were five protean singers, each one of them attaining great acclaim within the music profession and among pop culture cognoscenti.

The Hotsy-Totsy Boy

The comic heart of The Rhythmaires belonged to Charlie Parlato, born in Fredonia, New York in 1919. After attending Hutchinson Central High School in Buffalo, he enrolled in the Ithaca University of Music, where he developed as a singer and trumpet player. His talents took him to the west coast, where he shared them with the bands of Harry James, Horace Heidt, Spike Jones, David Rose, Harry James, and Kay Kyser; as well as with Dinah Shore, Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald and Dennis Day. Parlato's irrepressible flair for comedy led to assignments with Bob Hope, Milton Berle, Jimmy Durante, Eddy Cantor, Red Skelton, and Ernie Kovacs.

Parlato was active as a background vocalist in Hollywood musicals: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *Babes in Toyland* (1961), and *Silk Stockings*, (along with Conlon and McLean, he sang 'The Ritz Rock 'n' Roll' with Fred Astaire). During the fifties and sixties he was put to humorous effect on commercials for a large assortment of products, including Aqua Velva, Alka Seltzer, Swift Meats and Chung King.

In 1964, along with the space age pop group The Randy Van Horne Singers, Parlato sang the high part on The Flintstones theme.

Charlie Parlato was also the featured trumpet player on The Tennessee Ernie Ford Show from 1954-1956. Most of all, he is remembered for his twenty-five years, beginning in 1962, as one of Lawrence Welk's Music Makers. He was one of the beloved Hotsy-Totsy Boys from 1969-1980 on Welk's television show, where his antics with honky-tonk pianist Jo Ann Castle were a source of many a Saturday night delight. His trumpet needlework contributed immeasurably to the Welk sound.

Charlie Parlato

It was a sorrowful coincidence that as this article was being prepared, Charlie Parlato died on September 8th, 2007 in Oak Park, California.

Tinker Bell

In the May 26th, 1958 issue of *Time* Magazine the following passage appeared:

> *The most pervasive voice in all of radio or television belongs neither to Bing Crosby nor Perry Como, but to a pretty, twinkly, auburn-haired girl named Gloria Wood. Blessed with a four-octave range and a gift for mimicry, Gloria can sing high or low, squeaky or sweet, on demand and to order. And the demand for such special talents is tremendous...With her four-octave range, which she claims matches the eerie range of Peruvian Vocal Acrobat Yma Sumac, she can take off from low C below middle C and soar to C above high C. But this endowment also drives Gloria to despair; nobody wants to hear her sing straight. ..."I like making money", she admits. "But I'd like to be known for all the things I've done. Nobody knows Gloria Wood."*

No doubt, Gloria Wood was prolific. She was born in Boston in 1923. Her mother was a local pop singer and encouraged both Gloria and her older sister Donna to cultivate their vocal skills. Shortly after leaving high school in 1941, Gloria joined Donna in The Horace Heidt Band. In 1947 Kyser offered Gloria the bittersweet assignment of replacing Donna when she died at the age of twenty nine.

Her knack for comedy punctuates scores of performances with The Rhythmaires. Crosby would occasionally showcase her apart from the group, notably on The Philco shows of March 17th and 31st, 1948 when, in duet with him, she reprised her Kyser success, 'Saturday Date'. They encored another of her Kyser hits, 'On a Slow Boat to China' on Philco June 1st, 1949. Her ebullience is on display on these, as is her impishness on Bing's 1950 recording and subsequent air checks of 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer', where she supplies the voice of the forlorn creature. On the Dec. 20th, 1953 broadcast Bing described her Rudolph "as a fine example of off-casting." She was also featured on 'Quicksilver' (Chesterfield, March 1st, 1950).

Gloria, like all the Rhythmaires, was an exemplar of the wordless vocal, as demonstrated on her 1953 Capitol recording 'Hey Bellboy' which sold a million copies. The song doesn't contain one recognizable utterance. 'Oh Honey (Please Don't Stop)' was another item in this vein, although here she managed to sing a few suggestive words. Two sides on the Mastertone label which bear her name are provocatively named: 'Rhumba at the Matzo Ball' and 'In Brazil It's the Nuts'. Gloria also recorded with Jimmy Wakely and Ricky Nelson and Spike Jones' City Slickers, and in the mid – fifties waxed an entire LP of romantic ballads for Columbia.

Gloria also had an extensive film career as a 'ghost' singer, her earliest venture in this field being in *Diamond Horseshoe* (1945). Uncredited, she is the voice of Adele Jergens in The Bowery Boys Crosby pastiche, *Blues Busters* ; and one of the voices (with Trudy Stevens) of Vera Ellen in *White Christmas*. Twice she was a partial stand-in for Marilyn Monroe in *River Of No Return* and *Let's Make Love*. She appears in *Gaby* singing 'Where or When', and sang for one of the twins in *The Parent Trap*, Lady Fish in *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* and Lucille Ball's young nephew in *Mame*. In fact, her transgender vocalizing talents were so astonishing that one firm, when planning a commercial featuring an eight year-old boy, a nine year-old girl, their mother and grandmother, decided to cut costs by having Gloria sing all four parts!

Gloria was the undisputed queen of the singing commercials, appearing on thousands of then, both on radio and television. One of the best known of these was for Rice-A-Roni (...The San Francisco treat); but her claim to advertising immortality certainly must be as the voice of the orbiting Tinker Bell in the Peter Pan Peanut Butter ads.

Gloria was utilized on numerous cartoons, beginning in 1948 in Walter Lantz' *Wet Blanket Policy,* where she was heard warbling her famous Woody Woodpecker Song. On television Gloria supplied various voices for The Bugs and Daffy Show and That's Warner Bros.; as well as that of Minnie Mouse and others characters on several Walt Disney programs.

Gloria wed in 1955, and it was around this time that she joined The Johnny Mann Singers. On January 1st, 1958 at Los Angeles radio station KFWB this highly regarded sextet participated in the launching of color radio, a fresh, high energy format devised by the broadcasting visionary Chuck Blore. This innovative concept would soon sweep the country and would come to be known as Top Forty, replete with fast-paced disc jockeys, weather spots, and promos. Mr. Blore recalls the impact which she made on that historic day.

> *Gloria, who would be the lead vocalist on most of the songs that day, was one of the most incredibly talented people I had ever met. Almost the instant she heard the track, she started singing along, no words, just 'riffs.' Here again, I had never heard anything even close to what she was doing so effortlessly ... and beautifully. My heart was almost pounding apart. If this wasn't Heaven, it sure was the next best thing.*

Gloria Wood, who died in 1995, lit sparks and won many devotees during an illustrious career spanning five decades. She added to The Rhythmaires a vivacious temperament which would always be her hallmark

The Lorelei from Birmingham, Alabama

The majestic Diva Loulie Jean Norman was born in 1913 in Birmingham, Alabama. During her adolescence at Phillips High School, and later on at Birmingham –

Southern College, it became apparent that she was a most gifted coloratura soprano with a four – octave range. Initially she wanted to pursue opera, but Loulie Jean decided to move to New York for a career as a radio singer. Her stunning beauty led to modeling jobs, and in 1936 she joined The Rhythm Singers on Kay Thompson's Chesterfield Program.

Loulie Jean Norman

She married naval pilot Norman Henry Price (who would become a decorated World War Two ace) and eventually moved to Los Angeles where they raised four children. Price became good friends with Clark Gable and taught him how to fly. The star would often seek shelter from fans at the couple's home. In 1940 Loulie Jean was selected as the summer replacement for Dinah Shore on the NBC radio program, The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street.

Much of this biographical information was provided by Loulie Jean's lifelong friend, Hugh Martin, the distinguished composer who along with Ralph Blaine is best known for his scores for *Best Foot Forward* and *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Mr. Martin, now ninety three, resides in Encinitas, California. He is currently preparing his memoirs for publication. He is a courteous and gracious gentleman and was most generous in sharing with me, during a telephone conversation, his recollections of Loulie Jean.

"We grew up a couple of blocks from each other as children. We went to school together. She was my favorite person and just about my favorite singer. We were both on The Kay Thompson radio show. I adored Loulie Jean's singing. Everyone was fond of her. She was a great lady.

She became acquainted with Bing Crosby in 1943. I recall about this time having lunch with her at the Armstrong Schroeder Restaurant in Los Angeles on Santa Monica Boulevard where a lot of movie people went. Loulie Jean said "Bing Crosby is the best popular singer in the world." I said that Frank Sinatra was. Well, Loulie Jean replied, "How could you think such a thing? Bing was the king!" When Loulie Jean started working with Bing, she was thrilled. She adored him."

How did Mr. Martin feel about Crosby's recording of 'Pass That Peace Pipe' and 'Connecticut', both of which he wrote with Blaine?

I think Bing's performances of my songs are wonderful. I understand that in Europe he sang 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' shortly before he died. (This would be his rendition with Twiggy from the posthumously broadcast Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas.)

About 'Connecticut', he remarked, "I don't know how Bing and Judy Garland got to record that. I never pushed anything. I'm not a good businessman. I wrote it with Ralph at the request of Meredith Willson (who at the time was conducting for *Mail Call*) He was saluting a different state each month and they couldn't get anyone to write a song about Connecticut. So I said that I'd do it! After all, Meredith was an icon for us. He loved the song."

Mr. Martin recalls that Connie Haines introduced the song.

"Also, around this time, my good friend Marilyn Maxwell was singing on the Crosby program. I would coach her. She desperately needed duet arrangements and I helped out. I never charged her for duets. I did it as a favor and she appreciated it. I even used to stand in during rehearsals for Bing when he was playing golf and Marilyn wanted to sing with somebody. So I would sing his parts for the Kraft Music Hall. 'Two Sleepy People' is one that comes to mind. (March 10th, 1944). One time, on an Armed Forces show, he introduced me as his accompanist Freddy Martin!

Marilyn was a hard worker, and so attractive that she did better than ones with better voices. She didn't have as wonderful a voice as some of her competitors. Loulie Jean Norman was in a class by herself.

Loulie Jean created a whole new style of soprano singing. Up until Loulie Jean popular sopranos were a little shrill and not gentle and soothing. Oh, that glorious sound she made! I think she created that sound. I don't think it ever existed before. And she had such elegant, beautiful diction. Like Gloria Wood, Loulie Jean had an extraordinary voice and an unusually high register. But Gloria used it more for comedic effect. Loulie Jean used it more for beauty."

Certainly, Crosby agreed with this assessment. He

singled her out time and again on radio for solo passages which cried out for an ethereal obbligato. She was once introduced by him as The Lorelei from Birmingham, Alabama; another time as The Hartz Mountain Canary. She is heard on 'Story of Sorrento' (Philco March 31st, 1948), 'Beyond the Reef' (Chesterfield November 1st and 15th, 1950; January 3rd and February 21st, 1951) and Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart' (General Electric October 9th and 23rd, 1952); while her talent for romantic duet was revealed on 'I Got Lucky in the Rain' (Philco June 1st, 1949). A favorite song that Crosby would sing during childhood was 'Whispering Hope'. When he reprised it on The Chesterfield Show (November 16th, 1949 and March 1st, 1950) with his brother Bob, Loulie Jean was given the special task to recreate their sister Catherine's part. This song of inspiration would again be heard on the Chesterfield show of May 10th, 1950, this time with Loulie Jean joining Bing and Mary Martin.

Loulie Jean's discography is multi-faceted. She appeared on Mel Torme's watershed recording of 'California Suite', particularly outstanding on The San Fernando valley movement. Many top-flight arranger/conductors regarded her as a muse and collaborated with her on albums. Gordon Jenkins was one; another was Billy May who summoned her unique sound for his Capitol LP 'Polynesian Adventure'. Henry Mancini employed her for his RCA album, 'The Trail of the Pink Panther' (and Other Pink Panther Themes). Paul Desmond and Buddy deFranco also favored her on their disc releases.

The Ray Conniff Singers and Spike Jones' City Slickers could take pride in Loulie Jean's membership. Her high register is memorable on the 1961 Token's hit 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'. She also recorded with Sam Cooke, and is the voice of The Future on Frank Sinatra's Trilogy album. Loulie Jean's recording of 'Vocalize', written by Hugh Martin for the 1954 MGM musical *Athena*, may be heard at her memorial website www.louliejeannorman.memory-of.com

Loulie Jean lent her gifts to several movies: *The Big Hangover*, *Dream Wife*, *GI Blues* (in which she covered Juliet Prowse), *Blue Hawaii* (in which she sang with Elvis on 'Moonlight Swim') and *Too Late Blues* (in which she covered Stella Stevens) and *A Boy Named Charlie Brown* (in which she joined forces again with Gloria Wood and John Scott Trotter). Jerry Lewis secured her for the role of *the Princess* for the cast of the soundtrack album of *Cinderfella* (which was different from the one in the actual movie.) Her most memorable screen credit is *Porgy and Bess*, in which, at the behest of Andre Previn, she sang *Summertime* for Diahann Carroll.

Her television credits included frequent appearances on The Dinah Shore Show, The Dean Martin Show and The Carol Burnett Show. She permanently entered the collective consciousness when she delivered the wordless vocalese over Alexander Courage's opening theme music for the first two seasons of *Star Trek*. That celestial siren song, ideally suited to her supernatural register, has been transporting obsessed trekkies 'to where no man has gone before' for generations. Sadly for Loulie Jean, the music was re-recorded without her voice for the show's third season so the beleaguered producer could avoid paying her royalties.

Despite the short-lived nature of her *Star Trek* tenure, Loulie Jean's name in the science fiction/horror genres is fixed. Spike Jones relied upon her in 1959 for his Warner Brothers cult classic, 'Spike Jones in Stereo: a Spooktacular in Screaming Sound'. Here she impersonated TV horror film hostess Vampira! Her completely improvised shrieking as the Crazy Soprano Ghost in the Haunted Mansion attraction in Disney Theme Parks has been delighting tourists for years.

Loulie Jean Norman Price died on August 2nd, 2005.

Life beyond Crosby

Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires appeared with Nat King Cole on several Capitol recordings ('Make Believe Land', 'Get to Gettin'', 'Song of Delilah', 'Ev'ry Day', 'Little Christmas Tree', and 'Frosty the Snowman'). They also backed Peggy Lee and Louis Armstrong on their recording of 'It's Christmas Time Again'. In 1949 fabled saxophonist Georgie Auld used their translucent harmonies for several sides which augured the cool jazz trend of the early fifties. In 1953 they recorded with The Bell Sisters. Later in the decade they were fixtures with Billy May's orchestra on The Stan Freberg Show on radio. On television, they appeared on the February 21st, 1954 installment of The Colgate Comedy Hour, which starred Abbott and Costello; and entered media lore when they sang Lionel Newman's theme song for the television series, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.

In 1956 the group appeared in the film *Cha – Cha – Cha – Boom!* directed by Fred F. Sears and starring

Perez Prado, Mary Kaye and Helen Grayco. The Rhythmaires are also remembered for the earfuls of music they provided for two Walt Disney animated features for which Conlon was vocal arranger: *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*, in which they sang the appropriately named 'Following the Leader'.

The Jud Conlon Rhythmaires had a distinctive impact on the next generation of choral artists. Their finely interwoven tones, oozy tonalities and echo-chamber effects are reflected in many groups which followed. Eugene Puerling of The Hi Los credits them as a major inspiration. The Four Freshman, The Swingle Singers, and The Double Six of Paris, owe a debt to their pioneering efforts. As Richard Carpenter of the brother/sister duo The Carpenters succinctly states at his website: "Conlon rose to prominence in the forties as a visionary vocal arranger, credited with what's known as 'tight' or 'close' harmonies for use in mainstream popular music (as opposed to barbershop). He was a major influence on me."

Apart from The Rhythmaires, Conlon maintained an active career in films (he dubbed the voice of Michael Kidd in *It's Always Fair Weather*) and TV. In 1956 he was music director and vocal arranger for the Prima Donna episode, starring Jeanette McDonald, on Screen Directors Playhouse. His vocal arrangements for 'Bobby Darin and Friends' in 1961 won plaudits. He was also the announcer for March of Dimes radio programs. Conlon died in Chicago on July 28th, 1966.

Once upon a time an amazing assembly of musical talents coalesced around Bing Crosby to produce an ideal of five part ultra-burnished choral harmony. The siren song of notoriety may have eluded these resplendent voices; still each one has their loyal and avid followers. As it was with Bing, giving musical pleasure was their goal; and, like him, the selfless principle It is the song, not the singer was ingrained in their hearts. The tunes of the golden age never had more humble or diligent servants.

To paraphrase Hugh Martin, They found their niche singing with the brilliant group of vocalists in Hollywood who sang behind the stars and made them sound twice as good.

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people who assisted me with the preparations and research for this profile:

Hugh Martin; Jimmy Bryant, vocal arranger and protégé of Loulie Jean Norman; Chuck Blore; Shannon Reed, close friend and neighbor to The Parlato Family; and Kay Kyser discographer Steven Beasley. Their guidance and information was most invaluable.

Martin McQuade

BING ON THE BOX

Bert has the challenging task of summarising the many tributes to Bing on the 30th anniversary of his death. First, the British side of things.

THE UK SCENE

With the death of Jane Wyman it was inevitable that the Crosby connection would come to the fore. She started her singing career on the radio as Jane Durrell so was an accomplished performer in that field by the time she teamed up with Bing in *Here Comes The Groom* and *Just For You.* The two films that produced firstly 'In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening' and 'Zing A Little Zong'. There was hardly a radio presenter of popular music who didn't feature one or both of those duets with Bing at the time of her demise, though in the case of 'Gold For Grown Ups' **Paul Barnes** played the entire soundtrack of the song. He noted that when Miss Wyman accepted her Oscar for her role as the deaf mute in *Johnny Belinda* she said she'd kept her mouth shut in the film and would do so now. A welcome relief from the usual gushing responses!

Over the weekend that commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of Bing's passing, many of the local radio presenters did Bing proud and that reporting will occupy much of this column. Not every station has been made available to listen to either by cassette or the 'listen again' feature on the internet so we mustn't overlook what has been heard beforehand from such regions. **Dewi Griffiths** from BBC Radio Wales, for example, has not forgotten our man including 'I Love You Samantha' and 'Anything Goes' during a Cole Porter tribute and also featured the brothers Mills and the sisters Andrews with Bing on 'Dinah' and 'South America, Take It Away'.

On **Malcolm Laycock's** programme on 5th August he played Bing singing "I'll Be Seeing You" from the BBC show he did with George Melachrino in August 1944. A pretty rare item to be sure and good to know that these little gems do surface on the BBC Radio 2 specialist programmes from time to time.

BBC BANS BING!

No, not the 'Young And Healthy' track on this occasion but something one would have thought more or less quite innocuous. Among **David Lowe's** regular contributions to the Crosby cause was the 1939 recording 'In My Merry Oldsmobile' which, at the time, was disallowed on the grounds that it advertised a commercial product. Of course, it does contain the line 'you can go as far as you like with me' but that double entendre would no doubt have gone way over Auntie

Beeb's head. For those with internet access BBC Radio Bristol can benefit from David's weekend programmes 'As Time Goes By' and 'Singers And Swingers' which are up there with the best of them for requested popular music. If you can listen 'live' so much the better, in which case you might have heard a couple of tracks from V-Discs: 'One Alone', Bing duetting with Trudy Erwin and 'By The Light Of The Silvery Moon' also featuring The Charioteers. A half dozen numbers with brother Bob's orchestra, mainly the Bob-Cats, was a welcome up-tempo change from David's mainly sentimental requests for with a mainly senior audience asking for the likes of 'Anniversary Waltz', 'Anniversary Song', 'So In Love', 'The Last Mile Home' and 'The Folks Who Live On The Hill', to quote only a few in that vein, it is clear that musical memories by association mean much to a great many listeners and David does his best to meet the continuous demand from his west of England listeners.

Howard Leader with his Big Band Swing & Balladeers, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturdays on BBC Radio Lincs. is a good friend to the ICC; you may recall reading in the last issue of this magazine that Ken Barnes guested on his programme to good effect. This time around Bing's brother Bob again had some air time providing the backing for 'A Little Bird Told Me', 'Dolores', Irving Berlin's 'Abraham', and almost inevitably 'You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby'.

David Jacobs [BBC Radio 2] usually chips in with a few Crosby vocals and often with surprise items. A 'live from the London Palladium' version of 'That's What Life Is All About' was among three numbers that included 'If I Had My Way' [soundtrack version] and 'Sentimental Journey' [KMH] to illustrate Bing's wide coverage of stage, screen and radio. David also featured the Bing and Rosie Clooney version, with the Billy May Orchestra, of 'I Can't Get Started', most famously performed by Bunny Berigan but delightfully interpreted by Bing both on this duet and with Pete Moore from the Buddy Cole sessions.

TWO REAL OLD GROANERS

....was how **Russell Davies** described William Bendix and Sir Cedric Hardwicke interpreting Burke and Van Heusen's 'Busy Doing Nothing' that was the hit song from *A Connecticut Yankee*..... Of course, they had more than a little help from 'you know who'.

Certainly if you enjoy all the anecdotal delving that Russell delivers on his BBC Radio 2, Sunday p.m. programme, you won't have been disappointed in the Bing content recently. Bing and Johnny Mercer performing 'Mr. Gallagher & Mr. Shean' was a case in point with Russell informing us that the original vaudeville performer, Al Shean, was the uncle of the Marx Brothers and that Jim Hoyl was a pseudonym of Jascha Heifetz who with Marjorie Goetschius was joint composer of the rather undistinguished 'When You Make Love To Me'. One of the rare songs that wasn't wholly written by Cole Porter appears on the Fred & Bing album that they cut in 1975. 'I've A Shooting Box In Scotland' has Bing and Fred apparently ad libbing amusing lyrics to T. Lawranson's contribution to the song; and with 'True Love' Russell noted that whereas Bing was feeling 'far above par' that wouldn't have suited him on the golf course!

The Three Groaners together

A telling comment from Mr. Davies on the 14th October was that the world has lost sight of Bing Crosby. Fortunately, he and many others continue in their efforts to keep Bing's legendary status from being completely buried. On that commemorative date Russell opened his Crosby contribution with the 'folksy America' number 'Dear Hearts And Gentle People' and returned to Bing's roots with 'Ol' Man River' in which his unwitting prediction 'get a little drunk and you land in jail' was to deprive him of 'Song Of the Dawn' in *King Of Jazz.* 'When You're In Love' concluded Russell's recognition of the occasion which, the previous evening, had been right royally commemorated by Paul Barnes from his Norwich based studio.

'THE SONG IS YOU'

.....opened Paul's three hour programme of which at least half was devoted to his efforts in, as he put it, 'redressing the balance' following on from the earlier in the year tribute to Elvis Presley. From Bregman to Scobey with 'Some Sunny Day' is but a small step to illustrate Bing's innate sense of swing honed from his early association with all the jazz greats. "One of the most imaginative songs ever written" is 'Changes' on which Bing gives "an exquisite performance" from his Whiteman period which was later well documented by Paul in words and music with the soundtrack version of 'So The Bluebirds And The Blackbirds Got Together' and 'The Five Step' which led neatly into 'St. Louis Blues' with the Ellington outfit, possibly Bing's greatest jazz-blues recording. Bing's, perhaps cultivated, laid back philosophy to life was amply illustrated with 'Give Me The Simple Life', 'I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For' and every time it rains, it rains, 'Pennies From Heaven' on which film promotional 12" rpm record Frances Langford, Louis Armstrong and the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra also contribute. Satchmo's patronized role [not Bing's fault] in the film of the same name was the start of his and Bing's professional partnership with Paul playing 'Gone Fishin' and the diabetically

disturbing 'Sugar' to illustrate how well they worked together. The word crooning, of murky origin, and subsequently 'crooner' was an appendage which Bing firmly attached to himself, almost certainly unwittingly, via the Sam Coslow – Arthur Johnston song 'Learn To Croon' as sung by Professor Bing to an attentive class in *College Humor*. At the end of the sequence Mary Carlisle hands the Prof. her books to carry and says "Going my way?" Ten years later the title of Bing's Oscar award movie! The 'Road' films weren't overlooked either. Bing and Bob duetting 'Road To Morocco' and the classic love song from that film also figured in 'Gold For Grown Ups' and that other Bob, Bing's brother, took a look back at 'time was' in the amusing airshot 'Let's Do It Again'. Kenny Baker enjoyed considerable freedom of expression on the overdubbed version of 'I Can't Get Started', the antepenultimate selection, and the classic and I believe only version of 'Straight Down The Middle' closed the tribute. "What variety! Marvellous." enthused Paul has he downed his regular post-programme brandy and drank "to absent friends."

AFTER SUNDOWN

'My Cup Runneth Over', 'The Pleasure Of Your Company', 'The Moon Got In My Eyes', 'Apalachicola FLA', 'Sunday, Monday Or Always', 'Fancy Meeting You Here', 'Weddin' Day', 'Well, Did You Evah!', 'In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening', 'Zing A Little Zong', and 'You Made Me Love You', are just a few of the many titles that **Anne Hopper** has played on her BBC Radio Cumbria programme. A listing she kindly sends via email to her CD benefactor, Maggie Ryan, and to this column directly now. Fortunately, she can be heard on the 'listen again' internet facility and I was able to tune in to her commemorative tribute on the 14th October a day or two later and listen to her mellifluous voice regaling her audience, who had not requested but 'demanded', Bing be remembered in words and music. A dissertation which ranged from 'I've Got The Girl' via a large segment of the Final Tribute LP featuring Michael Parkinson, Anne Shelton and Rosemary Clooney; Bing singing his last song 'Once In A While' and on through to him making an emotional farewell "thank you" to his British audience from the stage of the London Palladium.

To contact or hear her Music Box programme you want:

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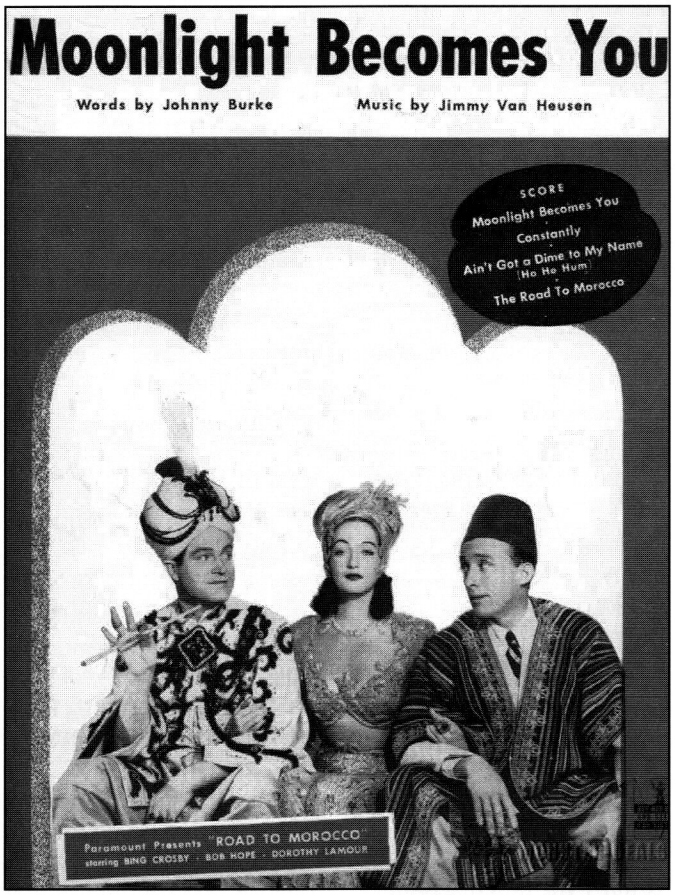
mobile: 0794 155 1646 or email anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk To listen again go to:

www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria/local_radio/

THEY'RE OUT THERE!

Bill and Angela Rennells received many requests to honour Bing on the commemorative date and not a few came from us members. The session opened with 'Anniversary Waltz' and continued with tracks as diverse as 'Here Lies Love', 'Walking The Floor Over You', 'Empty Saddles', 'Miss You', 'As Time Goes By' and the perennial favourite 'Moonlight Becomes You' requested by Ian Lawrence whose lengthy letter about Bing, published in a national newspaper, was quoted to good effect.


Moonlight Becomes You
Words by Johnny Burke
Music by Jimmy Van Heusen
SCORE
Moonlight Becomes You
Constantly
Ain't Got a Dime to My Name
(Ho Ho Hum)
The Road To Morocco
Paramount Presents "ROAD TO MOROCCO"
starring BING CROSBY · BOB HOPE · DOROTHY LAMOUR

Previous weekends had featured well over twenty similarly varied Crosby songs from both wireless and studio recordings that went out over the Kent, Oxford and Berkshire airwaves 10 p.m. Sunday nights to 1 a.m. on 96.7 fm, 95.2 and 104.1 respectively. The affable couple can be contacted for requests by 'phone or email to bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk You don't have to live in their catchment area to have a track played and it gives them a buzz to know their programme has supporters far and wide. Also, the more requests the better even if you can't hear them broadcast you will have done your bit for Bing!

'Parky' (**Michael Parkinson** to those who are not familiar with him), who was responsible for those two great TV shows with Bing, played three tracks from the Bregman album and **Desmond Carrington**, whose programme is sadly diminished, chipped in with 'Straight Down The Middle'. Surely, there will be others out there who also remembered our man that week-end. **Mike Carey** of Radio Derby was one who certainly did and I'll have details next time around.

HAPPY FEAT

It was good to hear from **Jim Reilly** again and to know that Bing hadn't been overlooked on Angel Radio of Havant 101.1fm, also available on the internet angelradio.co.uk. The programme was broadcast at 10.30 on Sunday morning as well as at 11pm on the 14th October. Being a long time fan of Bing and, of course, a major player in the ICC, Jim was able to spread the gospel to his south coast listeners with attention to detail and accuracy that only the dedicated can bring to the

microphone. Every aspect of Bing's life and career was covered in this eighty-five minute programme, which is no mean feat in itself. Opening with 'Once In A While' from a December 1937 KMH programme and concluding with Bing's final song of the same title from the BBC Maida Vale Studio on the 11th October 1977 Jim included tracks covering such titles as 'I've Got The Girl', 'From Monday On', 'Happy Feet', the rather bizarre 'Poor Little G String' more songs from the wireless, 'A Fine Romance', 'Going My Way', and as part of a listener quiz to 'name the films' a quartet comprising 'The Kiss In Your Eyes', 'Down By The River', 'If I Had My Way' and 'Busy Doing Nothing'. Clearly, our good friend from Portsmouth has been busy doing plenty!

essex.monster@bbc.co.uk

....may seem a strange email address for a programme recalling the halcyon days of popular music, but **Eric Hall**, ably assisted by Oliver Rogers, likes his superlatives and everybody or everything is a 'monster star' or 'monster hit' in his eyes. So in coining that address he can be sure to be remembered and contacted. We were promised that Bing would be remembered on the commemorative occasion and, indeed, the programme started off with Bing welcoming his Palladium audience. Mostly, thereafter, it was a few extracts from the Autobiography album followed by rather too much of other artistes singing Crosby numbers. By all means have other singers on the show but let Bing sing his own songs! Later in the two hour broadcast we did hear Bing and Rosie duetting 'How About You' and who could complain about the resulting combination of Porter, Crosby and Sinatra in *High Society* but by and large the BBC Radio Essex contribution was disappointing. However, it was promised that there would be 'more next week'. Too late for this column's deadline, though!

By the way, have all of you in the UK seen and heard the Anchor Butter television advert featuring a considerable excerpt from Bing's interpretation of Cole Porter's 'Don't Fence Me In'? Many of us 'phoned 0845 600 6688 to thank the company.

Only one film on Sky for the 14th when *Road To Morocco* was screened. A very poor show!

THE USA SCENE

30 hours of Bing!

Cincinnati radio station WMKV-FM (89.3) honoured the memory of Bing with a 30-hour broadcast marathon simulcast over the internet of his work. Starting at noon on Saturday, October 13 and continuing through 6 pm on Sunday, October 14, listeners heard recordings from every phase of Bing's career - from his debut recording in 1926 to his final sessions in 1977. Along the way, there were interviews, outtakes, broadcast and film performances, plus a few surprises.

Nick Clooney, Rosie's brother, publicised the show in advance and received a number of messages afterwards:

On the WMKV salute to Bing Crosby, "Bing was the greatest! I miss him very much. By the way, I used to do record promotion for Der Bingle back in the day." - Nelkane Benton.

"Bing was the best; it's a shame that he is lost on today's media." - Pat Bonner, the Bronx.

"I had an entire room in my former New Orleans home filled with original Bing Crosby memorabilia.... Much was lost in (Katrina)." - Ron Cannatella, Lacombe, La.

"Although I grew up in the '60s and '70s, I've since become a big fan of Bing, as well as your wonderful sister, listening to them and their peers more than any recent music." - Kurt Schroeder, originally from Cincinnati, now Lovettsville, Va.

Mrs. Bing Calvert of Cincinnati always loved Bing Crosby, which "resulted in everyone calling me 'Bing.' The name stuck and to this day most friends don't even know my right name. Also, I became a singer and enlisted in the WAC during WWII ... where I sang with the Air Force Band and was known as a 'lady crooner'!"

Jon Oye emailed the station to thank them and received a nice reply.

Thanks for listening and for the kind words. WMKV is proud to be the station that still cares about incredible people such as Bing Crosby and a great period of American entertainment history. Maybe we can educate a few of the older and newer listeners while we entertain 'em! Thanks for listening! Your comments make the labor of love worthwhile for all of us at WMKV! Thanks,

George Zahn, Station Director

Arne Fogel has his program 'The Bing Shift' and plays Bing on the radio for an hour every week as he has been doing for many years. His program can be heard internationally via the internet. It's on via KBEM Jazz88 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, and can be heard over the KBEM website. The show is heard in the U.S.A. at 8pm CST, every Saturday. Arne's website, www.arnefogel.com, features an easy link to the KBEM website, as well as the song listing for each week's program.

The Ghost Of Bing?

We're indebted to **Lee Rotter** of Bethesda, MD for a posting on the internet Bing Crosby Discussion Board which reads more or less as follows:

"Does anyone in America watch Conan O'Brien regularly? For the past several months, (off and on, you never know when the skit is coming) Conan has had a bit on his show where the ghost of "an old popular crooner of the 1930's" will materialize on his show. Conan then talks to him for a bit and then coaxes him to sing "a few of his old hits". Well, the guy who's playing the ghost is doing a passable but obvious imitation of Bing Crosby. He starts out when he first materializes onto the show by singing "Ba ba ba booooo, ba ba ba boooooo" then he talks in the same sort of sing-songy way Bing talked in, very casual like, then Conan coaxes the humble and hesitant crooner "ghost" to sing his old songs. At this point the Crooner

ghost sings some very simple melodies, all his songs have the same simple melody, but every song has very politically incorrect lyrics. To avoid law suits I suppose Bing's name is never actually mentioned but anything that keeps even an idea of Bing to the fore must be welcome. "

Bing films on television in the States in no particular order as they say on The Box:
Holiday Inn, Oct. 11, Cinemax
The Bells of St. Mary's, Nov. 18, Turner Classic Movies
Alias Jesse James, Aug. 28, Turner Classic Movies
Man on Fire, Sept. 2, Turner Classic Movies
Going My Way, Sept. 5, HBO
High Society, Sept. 9, Turner Classic Movies
Here Comes the Groom, Sept. 9, Turner Classic Movies
Stagecoach, Sept. 22, American Movie Classics

Bert Bishop, 22nd October 2007

The Crosbys, Mere et Fille

Martin McQuade reports on another radio show

On October 2nd, 2007 television talk show legend Joe Franklin taped a telephone conversation with Kathryn Crosby and her daughter Mary. The interview, which was coordinated by this reporter, was broadcast throughout the auspicious date of October 13th on Franklin's weekend show on the Bloomberg Radio Network. Kathryn sparkled as she answered questions during the first half of the program. A broad range of topics was covered.

1) Bing and Kathryn's first date, Academy Award Night, March 30th, 1955: "Nobody knew who I was before. I was on front pages all over the country the next morning. Bing said, 'It's going to be different now because people know who you are.' What did he mean? My father was county road commissioner in West Columbia, Texas!"

2) Their Age Difference: "I was the oldest old maid in West Columbia, Texas. Nobody got married after 18 or 19. I met Bing when I was 19."

3) Married Life: "There were two provisions. I had to go on with my nursing and my acting. Bing readily agreed to each. Of course I didn't realize once you had three little children it's really hard to run around."

4) Dixie: "What a beautiful gorgeous Lady!"

5) Bob Hope: "Bing kept trying to teach Bob things he was good at. Bing took him on a salmon boat. After two days he had him flown back to shore. Why? Bob said that fish don't applaud!" (an excerpt from *Road to Morocco* was played at this point.)

6) Going My Way: "Bing didn't feel right about playing a priest. He thought it would be sacrilegious until a monsignor said, 'you're the only person who could play this.'"

7) Gary Crosby: "He wanted to be an only child. That's hard when you have three brothers just about your age. From time to time Gary was as happy and sweet and grateful and dear. He once asked me if I had ever seen him be rude to his father. I never saw it."

8) The Christmas Specials: "How marvelous that the last show had a platinum record with David Bowie." (an excerpt from 'Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth' was heard.)

9) Bing's personality: "When he worked with guests on his program - children, or old people or any of the great serious artists - he always treated them as if they were the most important guests that he was ever going to have."

Mary, eloquent and charming, was the focus of the second half of the show. She spoke about *Dallas*. She was so surprised to learn on her first day of work with JR co-star Larry Hagman that he was the son of Mary Martin. She remarked, "So you're one too!"

She recalled that the producers were nervous that the general public was not going to accept Bing Crosby's daughter doing horrible things to JR. "I'm thrilled to be a trivia question and to have Dallas part of my resume." (a melodramatic dialogue from an episode was used to underscore the reminiscence.)

Mary cited her childhood acting endeavors with Bing, *The Demon Under the Bed* and *Goldilocks*, were cited. Mary mentioned that *Goldilocks* was one of the first films which mixed people and animation. Offers came in "but Mom and Dad thought it wasn't a good idea for their daughter to be a child actor. I was furious."

About growing up, she said that there wasn't much youthful turbulence. "My parents would not allow great rebellion in my family."

What are her favorite Crosby films? *The Country Girl*, *Going My Way*, *The Bells of Saint Mary's* came to mind. She added, "He was able to be so true as an actor in whatever he did. It wasn't simply how talented he was as a singer; but how pure and clean he was as an actor. I find it extraordinary!"

Joe Franklin concluded this insightful session with a simple, cogent statement.

"Bing's contribution to show business is lasting and forever."

A note. Film historian Eric Chadbourne has been hosting a commemorative Crosby tribute during October at The Forest Hills Community Center in Queens, New York. *Rhythm on the Range, Road to Zanzibar, The Emperor Waltz, Mr. Music,* and *Here Comes the Groom* have been screened to enthusiastic audiences.

Martin McQuade

Ray Charles Speaks To Leeds

'Small but beautifully formed.'

'Quality before quantity.'

These were phrases I heard during the 42nd Bing event in Leeds, marking the thirtieth anniversary of Bing's death. Attendance was down to 33, but I can honestly say I enjoyed this event even more than the previous three I attended. Westwood Hall has a new DVD projector, which had been tested and approved well in advance of our gathering by Michael Crampton and operated with characteristic aplomb (after a year's absence when some amateur took over!) by Malcolm Macfarlane. The carvery this year was up to the standard expected of a leading UK conference centre and was

commented on with approval by several of the people I met. The air conditioning, erratic by reputation, decided to enter into the overall spirit of congeniality and presented no insuperable problems.

Malcolm returned with renewed vigour, presenting a delightful mix of sounds and pictures. A highlight for me was the interview with Ray Charles, Perry Como's musical director, who also worked occasionally with Bing. Malcolm had travelled to Ray's home to secure the interview where he had found Ray surrounded by an immense library of music, both classical and from his TV shows. Alert and entertaining at 89 years old and still not completely retired, he described the programmes he worked on with Bing in glowing terms. Speaking directly to camera, he wished members of the ICC well in their support of Bing's legacy.

Ray Charles (left) with Malcolm, standing in front of some Ray's classical albums.

Among the film extracts presented by Malcolm were 'Straight From The Shoulder, Right From The Heart', Bing's duet with Kitty Carlisle from the 1934 film *She Loves Me Not*. This was in marked contrast, as we advanced more than forty years, with the highly entertaining offering from Bing and Bette Midler in the Pasadena show that marked his fifty years in the business. Bob Hope's presentation to Bing of a 'Crummy' award came with a recommendation from both Malcolm and Ken Crossland as a valuable template for paying tribute to any work colleague whose parting is more a relief than a sadness. During the sequence, in which Bob performed with customary skill from a tight script, Bing turned the tables with an expertly placed ad-lib.

From *Hollywood Palace* extracts supplied by Greg Van Beek we heard a splendid Bing rendition of 'Strike Up The Band'. Duets with Peggy Lee, George 'Sugarthroat' Burns, Ella Fitzgerald, Phil Crosby and Jimmy Durante followed. Of great interest, because it contained slightly different lyrics from later versions, was the very first airing of 'There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About', from a 1969 Jackie Gleason Show. From Gord Atkinson's *Showbill* documentary we heard 'Whistling In The Wildwood', a song which Bing couldn't remember singing.

Was this going to be the year that someone scored a maximum ten in Arnold Pope's quiz? Certainly not! Malcolm got nine, Ken Crossland got eight and those of us in the chasing pack could manage no more than a miserable six! (Still, Michael was as generous as ever with prizes. I was able to cross Volume 2 of 'Good and Rare' off my Christmas list!)

Arnold Pope (left) presents Ken Crossland with his prize.

At the start of the day, everyone had stood in silence for two minutes to remember those who had sadly passed away since the last meeting. In spite of the lower turnout, Michael was pleased to welcome three new members – Jeremy Rose, Bob Halls and Colin Stewart – all of whom were received with warm applause. Apologies for absence came from Gun and Ole, Ron Bosley, George and Marie Patmore, Roy Edwards, Jane Fitzpatrick and Mary Quinn. The meeting agreed an inevitable rise in the annual membership fee to £15.

The day was excellently rounded off with a further selection from Bing films. Michael asked if we thought it was worth doing again next year. I'm sure you can guess the reply.

John Walton

(Editor: Many thanks, John. I always feel guilty at 'lumbering' someone with having to write a report on the Leeds event as it may spoil their enjoyment of the day. It's like being asked to deliver the vote of thanks at the end of a meeting as it ruins the meeting for the person selected. However, John did seem to enjoy himself. At the conclusion of the day's programme, newcomer Bob Halls stood up and expressed his thanks to the organisers and he followed this with a letter to Michael Crampton:

Just a few words to thank you and Malcolm for your

welcome and organisation/presentation of the Bing day at Leeds on the 7th October. I'm involved with a few voluntary ventures myself, and few people really appreciate just how much work and time goes into something of this magnitude, not least the impact on family members as we pursue our various interests. I understand that you were due to start work bright and early on Monday morning, despite the endeavours of the weekend. A sobering thought as you wake up exhausted in deepest Yorkshire!

Albeit I said a few words on behalf of the newcomers to Leeds at the end of the meeting, I thought I would expand on what I said, possibly for inclusion in the BING magazine, if appropriate.

Unfortunately for me, and my fellow members attending for the first time, declining numbers, for understandable reasons, will probably threaten the long term continuance of the event, and the joy of meeting up with some quite special like-minded people. My word, how I wish I had known about it earlier, as reading through back copies of the magazine, many fine individuals have now left us for a round of golf with Bing somewhere in the great beyond.

The bond which exists between members of the club was very evident as soon as I walked into the venue, and there followed a warm and genuine welcome from Malcolm and yourself, and likewise from those gathered for the day. Names I had read in the magazine suddenly had faces and it was so encouraging as they imparted their vast knowledge of Bing, both in life and death. As I said my farewells that night to Bert Bishop's group, one of them said, 'see you next year, if we are still alive.' I pray most earnestly that they are!

So, in conclusion, and as a reply to anyone who feels there should not be further meetings, I would encourage members who have not experienced the joy and warmth of Leeds, to put next year's date in their diaries and really make the effort to meet some wonderful people who strive to keep Bing Crosby's memory and music alive. Of course as advancing years take their toll, numbers attending will decrease, but my word, even a small group in such enjoyable company can only be positive.

Thanks to all on the day for such a brilliant day, and if people can get there from the south of France, and Dublin, surely the rest of us can brave the roads and railways of the mainland. Anyone want a lift from East Anglia next year?

Regards
Bob Halls

Arnold Pope's quiz is always a mixture of very easy and very hard questions. This was the 25th year that Arnold has presented a quiz. Want to see how you would have scored? Answers at the end of 'Keeping Track'.

1. Name the film that featured this song. ("My Melancholy Baby" is played)
2. Name the year these 3 tracks were recorded. ("A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" – "A Song Of Old Hawaii" – "The Girl With The Pigtails In Her Hair")
3. A track from radio was played ("Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow"). Was it from:
(a) Kraft (b) Philco or (c) Chesterfield
4. Medley of 3 played. What have they in common? ("Kentucky Babe" – "People Will Say We're In Love" – "Darling Nellie Gray")
5. Medley of 3. Which track is with The John Scott Trotter Orchestra? ("How Can You Buy Killarney" – "Long Ago And Far Away" – "But Beautiful")
6. Name the girl in this radio duet.
(a) Eugenie Baird (b) Marilyn Maxwell (c) Trudy Erwin
(Bing and the girl sing "Side By Side")
7. Medley of 4 played. Which is the odd one out? ("Just One More Chance" – "Two Cigarettes In The Dark" – "Never In A Million Years" – "Down By The Old Millstream")
8. Name the orchestral accompaniment. ("May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You"). Is it (a) Ken Darby orchestra (b) Simon Rady orchestra (c) Victor Young (d) Lyn Murray orchestra?
9. Excerts from 3 songs played. On which of these tracks does Bing whistle? ("In My Merry Oldsmobile" – Me And The Moon" – "Ridin' Down The Canyon").
10. Medley of 4. What have these 4 in common?
(short excerpts played from "Mexicali Rose" – "The One Rose" – "San Antonio Rose" – "The Rose Of Tralee")

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Jane Wyman – passed away on September 10 at the age of 90. Although she won an Oscar for her role as a deaf rape victim in the film *Johnny Belinda* and she'll probably be best remembered by the general public for her portrayal of a power-mad winery owner in TV's *Falcon Crest.*

Wyman's film career started in the 1930s and stretched up to 1969's *How to Commit Marriage*, co-starring Bob Hope and Jackie Gleason. From 1981 to 1990 she played Angela Channing, a Napa Valley vintner who maintained her grip with a steely will on CBS' *Falcon Crest.*

Her marriage in 1940 to fellow Warner Bros. contract player Ronald Reagan was celebrated in the fan magazines as one of Hollywood's ideal unions. While he was in uniform during World War II, her career ascended, signaled by her 1946 Oscar nomination for *The Yearling.*

She and Reagan divorced in 1948, the year she won an Oscar for *Johnny Belinda.* Reagan reportedly cracked to a friend: "Maybe I should name Johnny Belinda as co-respondent."

After Reagan became governor of California and then president of the United States, Wyman kept a decorous silence about her ex-husband, who had married actress Nancy Davis. In a 1968 newspaper interview, Wyman explained the reason:

"It's not because I'm bitter or because I don't agree with him politically. I've always been a registered Republican. But it's bad taste to talk about ex-husbands and ex-wives, that's all. Also, I don't know a damn thing about politics."

A few days after Reagan died on June 5, 2004,

Wyman broke her silence, saying: "America has lost a great president and a great, kind and gentle man."

She was Bing's leading lady in two consecutive Paramount features. For *Here Comes the Groom* (1951) she played Emmadel Jones. Bing and Jane marry in the end. Director Frank Capra said of her, "Much to my delight I discovered that Jane Wyman - short nose, long legs, big heart, and all talent - had a rarely used flair for singing and dancing...I had to have a great song for Jane to do with Bing." That great song turned out to be "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening." Then, in *Just for You* (1952) she was Carolina Hill. Bing and Jane plan to marry in the end. Although not primarily a vocalist she sang in both films. In fact, it was as a vocalist that she made her showbusiness debut.

Bing and Jane on the Just For You set

Born Sarah Jane Fulks in St. Joseph, Mo, she grew up in a cheerless home in which her mother's time was devoted to her seriously ailing husband. After her father died, Sarah Jane accompanied her mother to Los Angeles, where the girl tried to get jobs in the studios. There was no work for the snub-nosed teenager, and she returned to St. Joseph.

She attended the University of Missouri, worked as a manicurist and switchboard operator, then sang on radio as Jane Durrell. When that career dwindled, she decided to try Hollywood again, began playing bit parts, and changed her name to Wyman. Among the uncredited bit parts she played was one as a chorine in Bing's *Anything Goes* (1936).

Her best years were probably the ten between 1945, when she proved her acting talent in *The Lost Weekend* and 1954, when she received an Oscar nomination for her part in *Magnificent Obsession.* During that time span she portrayed an Academy Award winning deaf-mute in *Johnny Belinda* (1948) and received a further Academy Award nomination for her part in *The Blue Veil* in 1951. When Hollywood film roles failed to attract her, she embarked on phase three of her showbusiness career on television.

Her first entry into television came with "The Jane Wyman Show," an anthology series that appeared on NBC from 1955 to 1958. She introduced the shows, half of them starring herself, half with other actors. She quit the show after three years, saying that "putting on a miniature movie once a week" was exhausting.

When Wyman received the script for *Falcon Crest*, she was undecided about undertaking the nasty, power-hungry Angela Channing, so different from the self-sacrificing characters of her movie days. But she liked the idea that Angela "runs everything. She goes straight through everything like a Mack truck."

Riding the wave of prime-time soap operas that made "Dallas" and "Dynasty" national sensations, *Falcon Crest* lasted nine seasons. The series ended with Angela again in control of the vineyard. Her battered family raised their glasses in a toast: "The land endures."

Melville Shavelson (1917-2007) Screenwriter, director and producer. Shavelson, who died on August 8th, was a film writer, producer and director who wrote for Cary Grant, Lucille Ball, Sophia Loren and Frank Sinatra, but was particularly associated with the comedies of Bob Hope and Danny Kaye. It was Hope who got him into movies after he had spent several years writing for the comedian's radio show. After helping fashion Hope's *The Princess and the Pirate*, and Kaye's *Wonder Man* and *The Kid from Brooklyn*, Shavelson became the director of such later films as Kaye's *The Five Pennies* and *On the Double*, and Hope's *The Seven Little Foys* and *Beau James.*

His main interactions with Bing were through the co-writing of *The Princess and the Pirate* (1944) and the screenplay for *Hollywood Victory Caravan* (1945). More importantly, he was the co-writer of the screenplay of *Riding High* (1950) with Robert Riskin and Jack Rose.

Born in Brooklyn to Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1917, he started writing for radio in his teens and in 1938, when Bob Hope was given his first radio series by Pepsodent, Shavelson was one of the eight writers Hope hired (paying them out of his own salary) to keep him supplied with gags.

"No one had ever tried to maintain a staff that size," Hope said, "but I wanted to be number one and I knew that jokes were the key." Hope also wanted to go on air each week with topical jokes written right up to broadcasting time. Shows were live, and as there was a three-hour gap between broadcasting for the East and West Coasts, Hope would have his writers on hand to replace jokes that had not worked. Shavelson recalled writing frantically, with Hope throwing jokes out as fast as he got them. "He finally agreed on a joke just about thirty seconds before it went into the sketch," he said, "but that's how immediate it was. It was the greatest training ground for a comedy writer there could be.

Hope later asked the producer Sam Goldwyn to hire Shavelson to co-write the movie *The Princess and the Pirate* (1944), which started with a typical Shavelson gag. A printed foreword advises the audience that they are about to witness a story featuring one of the most bloodthirsty and fearless pirates of all time, then Hope's face appears at the corner of the screen as he announces, "That's not me, folks, I come on later - I'm a coward."

The film's famous closing scene has the heroine Virginia Mayo, told she can marry the man of her choice, walking past Hope to the arms of a sailor - Bing, to

which Hope responds, "I work my brains out for nine reels and some bit player from Paramount comes over and steals my gal. That's the last picture I'll ever make for Goldwyn."

With Bob Hope's encouragement, Shavelson turned writer-director in 1953 with *The Seven Little Foys,* a biography of Eddie Foy, the singer-comic who had to bring up his seven sons alone when his wife left him. Hope wanted to broaden his appeal, giving his roles more depth with less emphasis on non-stop gags, but the response was mixed, though a memorable tap duet with guest star James Cagney found favour, and the screenplay by Shavelson and Rose received an Oscar nomination.

Beau James (1957), in which Hope was Jimmy Walker, New York's colourful, if flawed, mayor in the Twenties, was better, narrated by Alistair Cooke as a love letter to the city. Shavelson's later films included his share of flops, including a Paul Newman-Joanne Woodward comedy, *A New Kind of Love* (1963) and most notably *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966), an overblown and unsuccessful drama about Col "Mickey" Marcus, a key figure in the struggle that led to the creation of Israel in 1948. Shavelson "ghosted" four books for Bob Hope, and wrote a hilarious, best-selling account of making *Cast a Giant Shadow* called 'How to Make a Jewish Movie' (1971). In 1975 he wrote 'Lualda,' a risqué, light-hearted novel about a producer's love for a voluptuous Italian. When asked if it was based on Sophia Loren, he simply smiled knowingly. His autobiography, 'How to Succeed in Hollywood Without Really Trying P.S. - You Can't,' was published this year on his 90th birthday, when he commented, "I miss being young."

Merv Griffin, the chat show host died on August 12 at age 82 after a battle with prostate cancer. He was a former big-band vocalist, novelty singer and TV chatmeister who parlayed his fame into a reported billion-dollar entertainment empire. Griffin's showbiz legacy may be less his amiable persona than his creation of "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune," two network game shows from the 1960s-70s that later became syndication blockbusters, still topping the ratings in local stations' lucrative evening hour leading into prime time. The millions Griffin amassed there enabled the San Mateo, Calif., native to enter the real estate arena, where he crossed swords with Donald Trump in the 1980s Atlantic City casino wars, redeveloped Los Angeles' celeb-splashed Beverly Hilton Hotel, and created such prized resort properties as California's La Quinta golf oasis.

He remained best known, however, for his two decades hosting self-titled TV talk/variety programs in a relaxed, neighborly manner. From the mid-'60s to the mid-'80s, Griffin genially showcased actors, singers and politicians.

But the first celebrity success for Mervyn Edward Griffin Jr., born July 6, 1925, had come as a singer on radio and with Freddy Martin's band. He had a voluminous but often overlooked recording career as a subtly emotive singer, whose sole remembered hit oddly became the novelty million-seller "I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts" in 1950. Film, Broadway and TV appearances followed, with Griffin's first game-show gig coming in 1958 as host of the ad-lib-friendly "Play Your Hunch."

Merv Griffin (left) laughs with Bing and Rich Little.

He was drafted as a fill-in for "Tonight" host Jack Paar in 1962, and his easy charm earned him first an NBC daytime talkfest and soon the offer of a syndicated variety show. "The Merv Griffin Show" was a hit throughout the country in 1965, running most often in daytime but against Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show" on New York's WNEW (now WNYW/5). CBS lured Griffin to mount a national challenge to Carson in 1969, but that much-hyped network late-night show lasted only three years. Bing appeared on that late night version on January 3, 1972 with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. Griffin then returned to syndicated talk until 1986, interviewing a variety of showbiz, political and public figures he claimed numbered more than 25,000. Bing appeared several times on the syndicated show, the most memorable being the program shown on CBS on July 25, 1976. The show was taped at Caesar's Palace and Bing came out to thunderous applause as the introduction to "Where The Morning Glories Grow"

began. It was intended that Bing should lip synch to his recording of the song, but the applause went on for so long and was so loud that he missed his cue and the recording started while he was still saying thanks for the ovation. Merv Griffin came out, the song stopped and they chatted briefly before Bing started singing again. Rich Little was also a guest on the show and exchanged some humorous dialogue with Bing.

While building his on-screen career in the 1960s, Griffin had begun working shrewdly behind the TV camera by also producing game and talk shows. In 1964, he created "Jeopardy!" for NBC, a game that revealed the answer of a trivia question that contestants would then need to "ask" as an interrogative to win money. Griffin made another lucrative move by composing the show's signature tick-tock final-round music theme. "Wheel of Fortune" was another Griffin daytime creation (1975-91), asking contestants to guess words and phrases letter by letter after spinning a huge wheel to determine each letter's value.

Teresa Brewer died of a neuromuscular disease on October 17 at the age of 76. She was born Theresa Breuer in Toledo, Ohio, in 1931, and her mother took her to her first audition at age 2 — for a radio show called "Uncle August's Kiddie Show." Brewer sang "Take Me Out to The Ball Game" and performed for pay consisting of cupcakes and cookies from the show's sponsor. She continued appearing on radio shows off and on until high school, when she quit and moved to New York. She made her debut on "The Major Bowes Amateur Hour" radio program in 1936 and toured with the show until 1943. She made her first recording in 1949 and her first big record was "Music! Music! Music!" It debuted on 4 February 1950, was Number 1 on the Top 10 charts for four weeks, and stayed on the Top 10 charts for 17 weeks. Further hits followed and in 1953, "Till I Waltz Again With You" sold more than 1.4 million copies. That year she also won a poll conducted by Paramount Pictures to select the country's most popular female singer to cast in the studio's 3-D Technicolor movie, *Those Redheads from Seattle*. She landed one of the title roles, and the reviews were good. Paramount offered her a seven-year contract, but she declined, choosing instead to stay in New Rochelle.

Brewer appeared with Bing on his Chesterfield show on five occasions. On the May 9, 1951 program, Bing referred to Teresa as "the Sophie Tucker of the Girl Scouts"—a phrase that would be frequently quoted in subsequent years. She continued to record and make TV appearances, but she had four girls by then and spent most of her time raising them. Her popularity waned until the 1970s, when she became reacquainted with jazz producer Bob Thiele and began recording jazz standards with jazz greats. The two married in 1972 after she and her first husband, William Monahan, divorced.

Joey Bishop died of multiple causes at his home in Newport Beach, CA on October 17. He was perhaps best remembered as being a member of the "Rat Pack" with Frank Sinatra, Peter Lawford, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis Jr.

Bishop, the youngest of five children, was born Joseph Abraham Gottlieb in the Bronx, New York, to Jewish parents Anna and Jacob Gottlieb. He began his career as part of a standup comedy act with his brother Maury. Bishop guest-hosted on "The Tonight Show" more times than anyone else, and he frequently appeared on Steve Allen and Jack Paar's version of the show, as well as having his own television talk show, "The Joey Bishop Show" (1967-1969), a 90-minute late-night talk show on ABC. His co-host for this show was then-newcomer Regis Philbin. Bing appeared on this show on October 25, 1967 with Kathryn Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, and Matt Monro. Bing sang "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral". Although Bing appeared in *Robin And The 7 Hoods* with the rest of the clan, surprisingly Joey wasn't there on that occasion, having apparently fallen out with Frank during the early stages of the film.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing. This time it's John Scott Trotter.

It was in the summer of 1974 that I made one of my most productive trips to California for an intensive round of interviews. I met with several of Bing's friends, relatives and colleagues for my authorized radio anthology, *The Crosby Years*.

Following an initial meeting with Bing's brother, Larry, who was his public relations director, I left the Crosby Building on Sunset Blvd. and travelled to North Hollywood for an appointment with maestro John Scott Trotter.

The affable musical director of Bing's memorable radio shows welcomed me warmly to his modest apartment. I was surprised by his svelte appearance. He had lost considerable weight and was a shadow of the rotund, jolly band leader who was so well known to Crosby fans.

In producing an audio retrospective of the most successful recording artist of all time, it was essential that I speak with the musician most closely connected to his incomparable career.

"In the Crosby discographies," John told me, "I have more credits than anybody else, because I worked closely with him on radio from 1937 to 1954. During that time we made quite a number of records, although he continually recorded with other people, but the basic Crosby library was with me." He then recalled one of their earliest sessions, "It's still one of my favourite records", he said nostalgically, "it was one of the first ones I did with him, "The Folks Who Live on the Hill". It was recorded shortly after my arrival in California."

For Crosby historians it's worth noting that their first collaboration was the jaunty, "It's the Natural Thing to Do", from the film, *Double or Nothing*, recorded July 12, 1937. It's also of interest to mention that two of the members of the orchestra he assembled for the Kraft Music Hall, were trombonist Jerry Colonna and drummer Spike Jones, who both went on to comedy fame.

John was always billed with his first and second names. "John Scott seemed to fit my image as a conductor better than just John or Johnny. I was a big baby, weighing in at 12 lbs." As an adult he tipped the scales at close to 300 lbs. He began serious dieting late in his life when his health was in jeopardy.

During my visit to his compact condo, he took pleasure in showing me his impressive collection of records. Most of the disks were his collaborations with Bing. He reminisced warmly about several of their memorable sessions. Perhaps due to the size of the apartment with its limited space, he kept his library of "78" recordings on multiple shelves directly behind the headboard of his king size bed.

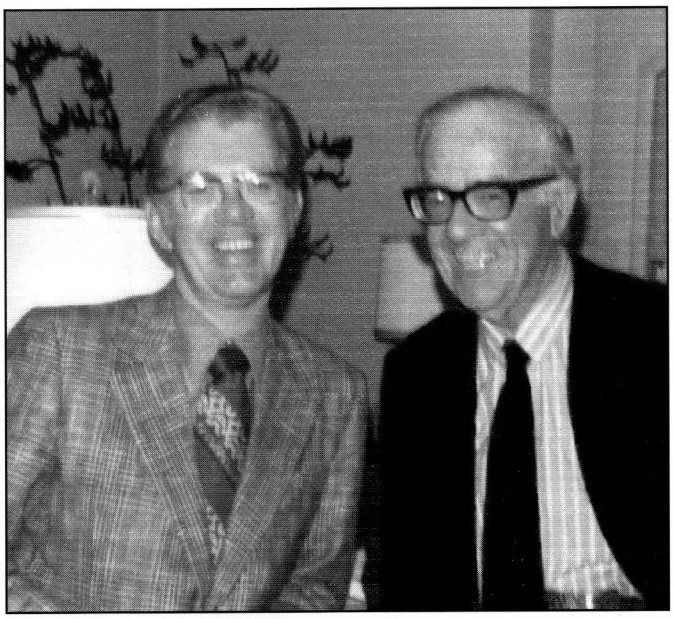
It was evident in our conversation that he had great admiration for Bing as both a man and an artist. Although, John had worked with Bing on the *Pennies From Heaven* film in 1936, their long association really began in the summer of 1937. "I received a telegram from Larry Crosby," he remembered, "asking me if I could move from New York to Los Angeles before September to take over the orchestra on the Kraft Music Hall." Jimmy Dorsey, the show's musical director, was not returning that fall as he was forming his own Big Band.

Born in Charlotte in 1908, John began his musical career at the University of North Carolina, where he became pianist-arranger for a college band formed by Hal Kemp. Years later working in New York, he came to the attention of Bing's most prolific songwriter, Johnny Burke.

Perhaps no one was better qualified than John to assess the quality of Bing's voice. "He is a baritone, but I would say a bass-baritone. He has a good low "F" and I have heard him hit an "E" right on the button and that's pretty low, even for a bass. In his style he was never a belter and never had to push his voice. He had good production. He didn't croon; he sang softly.

"Trudy Erwin, who was featured on both Bing's radio shows and records, said to me that she sometimes thought her ear drums would burst with the vibrations from Bing's voice box – and he would be just singing."

Among John's remarks regarding his long association with Bing, was this incisive comment: "He always preferred the first or second take when recording. After that his interest level would go down. He was easily bored. That's why his radio programs were so marvellous, because he was always interjecting new things. Of course, he was always relaxed and never temperamental."



Gord with John Scott Trotter

The variety format of Bing's shows and his stellar guests gave the Trotter orchestra the pleasure of accompanying the great musical artists of the 20th century. "I loved working with Dorothy Kirsten," John recalled fondly. "We had a 'whose who' of classical performers on the show including, Paul Robeson, Mischa Elman, Jose Iturbi and Feodar Chaliapin. All of Hollywood were guest stars from Gary Cooper to Jimmy Stewart. Henry Fonda and Mary Martin were also favourite guests – and of course Dorothy Lamour and Bob Hope.

"When Al Jolson was about to join us for the first time, one of my colleagues said, 'Oh boy you're in for it now'. However, I couldn't have had a nicer working relationship than I did with Jolson. You see, Bing was so big that people who were sometimes difficult in their own orbit, just couldn't be that way around Bing."

During the course of my reminiscing with John, I mentioned two of Bing's records that I felt were among their finest collaborations. Both were ballads that Bing sang beautifully and effortlessly, "Amor" and "Do You Care?" The first one he agreed was one of his favourite sessions, but the second one he couldn't recall. (Just as Bing had forgotten another of my favourite Crosby novelty ballads, "Whistling in the Wildwood".)

Of all the Crosby musical arrangements and accompaniments that are indelibly linked to John's name, one tops all others. "When we made "White Christmas" I thought it was a very lovely tune, but I had no idea that it would turn out to be the most famous recording of all time. However, working with Bing and knowing the depth of his public acceptance, there was always a good chance that any of our sessions would be successful."

He also recalled how the song might have been recorded in a different manner than its now familiar

arrangement. "There was an argument between Jack Kapp, who was the head of Decca Records, and Irving Berlin. The song was written for a scene in the picture that was set on the west coast. The lyrics of the verse began, 'I'm sitting here in Beverly Hills' – Berlin thought it was a marvellous poetic set-up for the chorus, but Kapp said it had nothing to do with the record. Kapp prevailed and we didn't record the verse, and as luck would have it, the movie setting for the song was changed later from sunny California to snowy New England."

When Bing heard Trotter's comments he had no recollection of the difference of opinion between Kapp and Berlin. "I don't recall a controversy, Gord; I know we didn't do the verse, not even in the picture. In fact it was done quite simply, sitting at a piano in a ruminative mood. There was no production just a chorus or two with the leading lady, Marjorie Reynolds."

In 1954 when the weekly Crosby radio program went off the air, Bing wrote a warm letter of appreciation to his long time arranger-conductor for his years of dedicated service.

From 1954-1960 the Trotter name appeared on the credits of the George Gobel TV show as musical director. During his time with the popular comedian, John remained a good friend of the Crosby's and was a regular visitor to their home.

In 1964 he took up his baton again for Bing to conduct the musical sequences on Bing's situation comedy television show. He was also kept busy during the 1960's as the musical director of several Crosby TV specials and conducted the music for the Charlie Brown animated TV programs. In 1970 he was nominated for an Oscar and a Grammy for his musical score for the feature film, *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*.

John Scott Trotter passed away from cancer October 30, 1975, a month after scoring a Boston Pops special for the public television network, PBS. His health had deteriorated in the months following my visit to his home. He was sixty-seven.

Bing, upon hearing of his death, said in tribute: "I am not musically educated enough to really describe what he was in music terms. I just know that he was very good and had marvellous taste."

Gord Atkinson

[Editor: Gord has a 2-part "Crosby Christmas" program in his 'The Crosby Years' series of CDs. This can be ordered direct from Gord and please see Trading Post for details.]

The Voice of Christmas Returns: Bing Records A New Yuletide Duet

For the singer who arguably has sung more duets than any other male vocalist, Bing Crosby added yet another one to his impressive catalog during the autumn of 2006. Once again, 29 years after he sang his final note on this earth, that famous Crosby baritone echoed through a recording studio as he joined forces with Chrissy DePauw, a singer/songwriter in her early twenties from the Los Angeles area for a fresh, new arrangement of Bing's original 1962 recording of "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas". It was commissioned by NBC / Universal to be a part of their fourth annual "Sounds of the Season" CD collection. The 2006 edition, titled Sounds of the Season: Classic Holiday Songbook, was available exclusively at Target department stores, or via the nbcuniversalstore.com website.

Chrissy DePauw with canine friend

It's not the first time Bing sang this song as a duet, however. He first sang it on TV with Carol Burnett in 1969, and then again with model/actress Twiggy in 1977. But this duet was something different. Something special. It's not some computer-generated, techno sounding remix. But rather, a brand new recording, with Bing's vocal isolated from the original recording, and a new orchestral backing added to it. Similar to what Ken Barnes did with the old Buddy Cole radio tracks in the late 1970's.

Ever since I first learned of this duet in November 2006, I had been searching for a way to contact Chrissy DePauw to find out more about it. Very little information can be found on the net, but I did learn she has her own My Space page at:

www.myspace.com/chrissysmusic

It was through this page that I was finally able to get a message through to Chrissy. She replied to my note, saying "What a surprise to get a message about a Christmas song!!! haha...I'm really glad you like it!!! I read something on his message board that some angry fans wrote, asking who the heck am I, and why do I deserve to do a song with someone so great!!! But, yes! I would love to answer any questions you may have", and gave me her phone number. I talked with her on August 10th, and asked her how this duet came about?

"Well, my producer was actually blessed with the

entire project, so he (Darryl Anthony Hawes), was hired on by NBC to do the whole project. So I guess you could say I was on the inside! It had to be approved, of course, by Bing Crosby's estate and by NBC." I then commented on how much I enjoyed the new orchestration, and how impressed I was at how it gave this song a whole new fresh sound, not just vocally, but musically as well. Chrissy said, "He (her producer) had some amazing musicians come by." Evidently, the same producer was there with her during our conversation, as she called out "Darryl...who's the dude who played keyboards on the Christmas album?" The response came back that he was the musical director for the Sonny & Cher TV show, Jerry Peters. He also arranged the strings and piano for this new duet.

I next inquired where the duet was recorded, thinking it may have been done at the famous Capitol Studios in Hollywood. "No, replied Chrissy, "it was actually done here at our own studio in Toluca Lake. The vocal was recorded here, as well as the mixing was done here."

Asking her if she found it challenging to harmonize with Bing, given that he sang "Merry Little Christmas" at such a low-key range, she replied "Well, my producer, Darryl Anthony, that's his specialty. His specialty is harmony and arrangements, and vocal producing, and I've been working with him for a while now, so it was really easy for me to understand what he wants."

I brought up the Christmas duets for television that I had a hand in working on, pairing Bing with Clay Aiken (in 2003) and Jessica Simpson (in 2004), and how they were met with a mixed reaction by some of the more seasoned Crosby fans. I said that at 35, I see them as something more positive. To me, those duets, and the one that Chrissy recorded, are exposing Bing's music to a younger generation who may not be that familiar with him. Chrissy agreed wholeheartedly, saying "That's my thoughts, definitely!"

In addition to the new duet with Bing, Chrissy also added her vocals to Lena Horne's recording of "Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow", and sang the "I Like A Sleighride" counter medley on Peggy Lee's classic recording of "Jingle Bells" for the new NBC album. I commented that I was most impressed with her harmony on the latter. In my opinion, it far surpasses Peggy's original arrangement. Chrissy said, "They were super fun to do too." The album also features the classic Bing Crosby and David Bowie duet of "Little Drummer Boy / Peace On Earth", as well as newly orchestrated songs by Dean Martin, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Al Green, and Lou Rawls.

So, it you happen to be doing your Christmas shopping at a Target store this year, be on the lookout for the NBC Sounds of the Season: Classic Holiday Songbook CD (EMI Music Special Markets label #09463-74438-2-8). It may also be available by now on Amazon.com, or a used copy perhaps could be found on eBay. It may take a little searching to find, but it's well worth adding to your CD collection.

Greg Van Beek

Keeping Track

***Ken Crossland** looks at the new releases.*

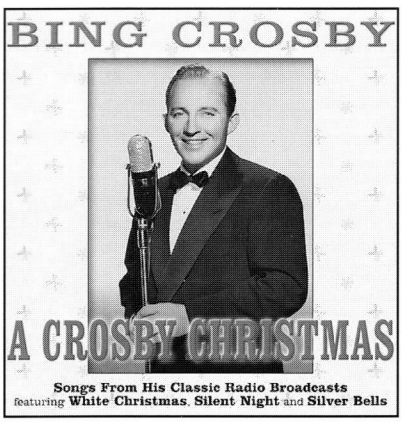
COMPACT DISCS

Christmas is a-coming, and just in case you hadn't spotted it, there's the usual rush of Christmas flavoured CDs featuring Bing to ram the message home! Inevitably, as every year goes by, we get more and more of the same so I have decided this year just to highlight the solitary Christmas CD that is a little bit different.

A Crosby Christmas **Varese Saraband** **USA** **$11.98**

1. Adeste Fideles (O Come All Ye Faithful) 2. Jingle Bells 3. The Christmas Song 4. Silver Bells (with Peggy Lee) 5. Deck The Halls / Away In A Manger / O Little Town Of Bethlehem / The First Noel 6. It's Beginning To Look Like Christmas 7. Here Comes Santa Claus (with Peggy Lee) 8. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer 9.Sleigh Ride 10. Silver Bells (with Ella Fitzgerald) 11. A Crosby Christmas Medley with the Crosby brothers: That Christmas Feeling / I'd Like To Hitch A Ride With Santa Claus 12. Silent Night 13. White Christmas

Despite the involvement of our Irish stalwart, George O'Reilly, in providing the material, copies of this have been slow to make the trip across the Atlantic. George tells me that the material is all sourced from radio and our American editor Greg, was one of the first to get his hands on a copy. "Great job by George O'Reilly and company" was his comment. Worth looking out for.


BING CROSBY
A CROSBY CHRISTMAS
Songs From His Classic Radio Broadcasts
featuring White Christmas, Silent Night and Silver Bells

So, having got Christmas out of the way – CD-wise at least, what else is new. Top spot this time goes to a Japanese issue.

Bing Crosby Sings Gershwin **Universal International UCCU-1155** **Japan** **$30**

1. Swanee (Buddy Cole version) 2. Summertime 3. I Got Plenty O'Nuttin' 4. It Ain't Necessarily So 5. Somebody Loves Me (1939) 6. Maybe 7. But Not For Me 8. Mine (with Judy Garland) 9. Embraceable You 10. They Can't Take That Away From Me 11. Love Walked In 12. Liza 13. They All Laughed 14. Nice Work If You Can Get It 15. Somebody Loves Me (1953)

Once again, I am indebted to Greg for an early reaction to what looks to be an interesting release. Here's what he said. "It's a very nice presentation of Decca and Verve tracks. The artwork was all taken from the original 1949 Decca 10" LP. A few of the 1930's cuts have a bit of surface noise, but it's apparent everything was taken from master sources. The 1940's & '50s cuts sound outstanding...I've never heard 1942's "But Not For Me" sound so crisp and clear! Being an import from Japan, it is a bit pricey, but worth it." Tracks 13 and 14 on the release are taken from the "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings" LP.

Bing & Louis – Havin' Fun **Storyville** **USA** **$22**

Disc: 1: **Havin' Fun** 1. Theme (Where The Blue Of The Night) 2. Chattanoogie Shoeshine Boy 3. I'm Coming Virginia (Peggy Lee only) 4. Royal Garden Blues (non Bing) 5. Baby, Won't You Please Come Home (non Bing) 6. Blueberry Hill (with Louis Armstrong) 7. Lazybones (with Louis) 8. Undecided (Ella Fitzgerald only) 9. I Get Ideas (Louis only) 10. Memphis Blues (with Louis and Ella) 11. Chesterfield Jingle 12. A Kiss To Build A Dream On (with Louis) 13. On The Sunny Side Of The Street (non Bing) 14. Gone Fishin' (with Louis) 15. Lazy River (Louis only) 16. Lazybones (with Louis) 17. Rockin' Chair (non Bing)

Disc 2: Havin' More Fun 1. Theme (Where The Blue Of The Night) 2. Way Down Yonder In New Orleans 3. A Song Is Born (non Bing) 4. Gone Fishin' (with Louis) 5. La Vie En Rose (non Bing) 6. Lazybones (with Louis) 7. Baby, Won't You Please Come Home (non Bing) 8. My Honey's Lovin' Arms (with Toni Arden) 9. You're Just In Love (with Louis) 10. Lazy River (Louis only) 11. Panama (non Bing) 12. Nice Work If You Can Get It (Dinah Shore only) 13. Blueberry Hill (with Louis) 14. Rockin' Chair (non Bing) 15. Rockin' Chair (with Louis, Dinah Shore and Jack Teagarden)

The title pretty much says it all with this release because any time Bing and Louis got together, you could tell that they were "havin' fun". There was a Jasmine release some years ago with the title "Fun With Bing & Louis", which itself was a re-issue of two LPs with similar sounding names (still with me?). Much of this material also appeared on the "Swingin' With Bing" set a year or two back. But there's lots on here, including plenty of dialogue. A nice set

The Firehouse Five Plus Two – Stoking the Fire – The Whole Story Vol. 2 **Jasmine JASCD 460** **£8.99 UK**

Everybody Loves My Baby – Five Foot Two, Eyes Of Blue – Memphis Blues (also with Ella Fitzgerald) – The Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me (remaining tracks non-Bing)

A 2-CD set featuring some of the songs Bing sang with thi[illegible]y jazz group. The Firehouse Five Plus Two were mostly comprised of cartoon animators from the Disney Stu[illegible]nd their spontaneous sessions were often injected with a good dose of humour. "Stoking the Fire" follows on [illegible] the success of the first volume "Settin' the World on Fire" JASCD 426 and is a great second helping, showi[illegible]at a fun and lively jazz band the Firehouse Five were.

The two final issues of the Chronological series are expecte[illegible]1 – may even be with you by the time this issue is in your hands. Full review next time. And finally on the CD front, nice to see the prominence given to the two "Good & Rare" CDs in the UK by Paul Rigby, who writes for the "Record Collector" magazine and for "Hi-Fi World magazine". Paul had this to say in the September issue of "Hi-Fi World":

CLASSIC CUTS

GOOD & RARE - VOLUME 1 AND 2 BING CROSBY 2006/2007

The statistics are staggering and could easily fill this page and more, but here's a select few.

He forged thirty eight No.1 hits (The Beatles only managed twenty four), 396 of his songs reached the charts (Frank Sinatra managed 209, Elvis Presley 149 and The Beatles sixty eight).

Between 1915 and 1980 he was the only motion picture star to rank as the number one box office attraction five times (1944-48). Between 1934 and 1954 he scored in the top ten fifteen times.

He also made more studio recordings than any other singer in history.

For Bing Crosby, that's the rub. Take those other artists. If you want to pick up the entire oeuvre of The Beatles, Elvis or Sinatra, you can order the lot in a nice neat package from the High Street or the Internet. No such luck for Crosby. For one, there's just so much of his work out there and, secondly, it's scattered to the four winds. Finally, when releasing CDs featuring the great man, too many record labels focus on a small selection of hits to the detriment of the rest of his work.

Reissue specialists Sepia Records has done music fans a service by producing two separate CDs chock full of

rarities. Richard Tay, Sepia boss, explained how the original content was decided upon for Volume 1, "I must give 99% of the credit to Malcolm Macfarlane. He's the editor of BING (a fan magazine). He advised me of the potential for '50s Crosby tracks that had never been on an official CD before. With Malcolm's important Crosby retrospective help we completed Volume 1, which was well received."

This year, Sepia decided to do a sequel, Volume 2, which has just been released. Macfarlane supplied Sepia with a list of tracks which, again, had never been on an official CD before. That list was whittled down to around thirty songs. Then contact was made with Geoff Milne – a big Crosby fan with a large collection of Crosby 78s in excellent condition, "Geoff was very generous with his help," said Tay, "We looked at the tracks and I played them all but there was no way we could fit in all thirty tracks. I wanted to create a balance of tempo so I decided to break up the ballads with Latin American numbers. I then sent the final list of 78s off to Robin Cherry for mastering whilst Malcolm has supplied the liner notes."

Cherry is a respected BBC Studio Manager who is currently working for BBC Radio 3. For this project, "I used a Technics SP10, which includes a 78 option – it's rumble-free and rigidly locked to the selected speed," explained Cherry. "With the SP10 I used an early long-armed, 12", SME arm with a Shure SE35 cartridge. The long arm is useful if I ever process 16" records.

"I like to keep an eye on the speed of the recording to correct possible errors – I've noticed that some Bing recordings, issued on a 78, will have a different pitch to the same recording issued on a vinyl LP. So which is the right one? I check the pitch and timbre against my own tone records and also my piano, which is permanently tuned to the correct modern pitch. I also note where Crosby is at in his career because his voice changed over time. If you play Bing a semi-tone out it's terribly obvious."

The resultant CD is an excellent release packing twenty six tracks onto a single CD. Dating from 1949-1955, the tracks derive from a range of composers: Arlen and Weill to Loesser and Berlin and include songs from two Crosby films: *Mr. Music* and *Here Comes The Groom* plus duets including his son, Gary and Donald O'Connor.

If you want more Bing Crosby rarities, take a look at Jonzo Records which has undertaken the colossal task of issuing all of Crosby's work in chronological format, as a limited edition (many of which have also been mastered by Robin Cherry). Starting from Bing's early works, the label has reached volume 47, which only takes Crosby to the end of 1947! It comes complete with alternate takes and very detailed liner notes. This is a work of love - the most dedicated and certainly the most important body of retrospective Crosby work there has ever been – and probably ever will be.

Paul Rigby

Paul is a very good friend to Bing, and the same edition of "Hi-Fi World" had a detailed article by Paul about Bing promoting the use of tape in 1947. The Jonzo Chronological series of CDs will end after the impending volumes 50 and 51 and Richard Tay will continue the series under a different name through his Sepia label. The first issue is expected in May next year. It is anticipated that the club will be able to purchase a supply in bulk and offer them to members at an advantageous price. Your support will be essential if the series is to continue.

DVD

Our DVD section this month is almost empty! A couple of Christmassy things are worthy of passing mention – Japan has a "special edition" release of the film *White Christmas* although the special features seem to be no more than those that have been around in the UK for a while. Closer to home (but Region 1 only), **"Bing Crosby's White Christmas All-Star Show"** has been heavily marketed on various internet sites although it appears to be more "all-star" than Bing. I suspect that it is the 1958 USO show featuring a host of stars and on which Bing's only contribution is to lip synch to his 1955 version of "White Christmas".

I also hear that there is a **"Bing Crosby: Signature Collection release"** which contains *Road to Bali* along with *The Road To Hollywood*, a compilation from several Sennett shorts. The DVD also includes the fairly rare *Reaching For The Moon* but I am told the quality of this is poor. Finally the DVD has about 16 minutes of trailers from Bing's films. At only $5 and three hours 45 minutes playing time, we can't complain at the cost. It's multi-regional too.

Both *Road to Rio* and *Road to Bali,* will be available to own in high-definition exclusively on the Bob Hope & Bing Crosby Double Feature HD DVD, due out on January 8, 2008. This HD DVD title will be priced at $19.98 SRP. According to information provided to us, these two films are newly restored and mastered in high-definition for this HD DVD release.

The best source of unusual Crosby material on DVD has been a series of private issues of DVDs of some of Bing's earliest and rarest films. US readers can access these via a search on eBay whilst UK readers should look at John Marshall's ad in "Trading Post". So far, six early films have been made available and having seen some of the

versions available from John, the picture quality is extremely good. The titles available are:

- The Big Broadcast 1932
- College Humor
- Here Is My Heart
- Too Much Harmony
- She Loves Me Not
- Anything Goes (1936)

What's On The Web?

As ever, the internet continues to be a source of wondrous things for the Crosby collector. I thought I would just throw a few numbers at you this time to give a sense of scale.

First off, eBay. Christmas always brings out the Crosby memorabilia and as at the time of writing (mid-October), there were 770 Crosby items up for sale. Next, the video web site www.youtube.com has 628 Bing Crosby related clips in its archive and finally, the Apple download music store, iTunes has over 60 Bing albums available for download. Here's what their site says about Bing.

"To hear Bing sing is to feel that everything is ok with the world – one of popular music's holy trinity of ultra-icons (alongside The Beatles and Elvis), Crosby delivered his soothing baritone via radio, records and the silver screen. December without his heart-warming "White Christmas" would be a complete travesty."

For a singer who passed away 30 years ago, and whose peak years were over 60 years ago, that strikes me as not half bad!

One last thing. Wig Wiggins has asked me to point out that American/Canadian members can obtain British CDs on such labels as Avid/ASV/Jasmine/JSP/Sepia by mail from **Worlds Records**, address: P.O. Box 1922, Novato, California 94947; telephone: 1-800-742-6663; e-mail: info@worldsrecords.com

Have a great Crosby Christmas.

Ken Crossland (ken@kencrossland.co.uk http://www.kencrossland.co.uk)

ANSWERS TO THE LEEDS QUIZ.

1. The Birth Of The Blues 2. 1940 3. Kraft 4. Choral accompaniment only. 5. Long Ago And Far Away 6. Marilyn Maxwell 7. Down By The Old Mill Stream (the rest contain a number) 8. Ken Darby Orchestra 9. Me And The Moon 10. Rose

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Grace, Princess of Monaco: A Tribute to the Life and Legacy of Grace Kelly

This travelling exhibition was at Sotheby's in New York in October and the indefatigable **Martin McQuade** went along on our behalf and arranged for photos to be taken of various items.

The exhibition included a selection of gowns, outfits, jewelry and accessories portraying Princess Grace's signature style and marking important events in her life. Among them was the blue satin column dress and cloak by legendary Hollywood costume designer Edith Head which she wore to the March 1955 Academy Awards – the night she accepted the Oscar for best actress for her role *in The Country Girl.* The Oscar statuette was displayed alongside the gown, as was her famous *Life* magazine cover. The 10.47 carat emerald cut diamond engagement ring seen in *High Society* was there too. The party gown designed by Helen Rose worn by Grace Kelly in *High Society* was auctioned at a gala affair on Oct. 25th hosted by The Princess Grace Foundation and presided over by HSH Prince Albert. The stunning gray over green dress fetched $220,000.

Also on display were personal letters from family, her Hollywood friends (such as Bing, Alfred Hitchcock, Cary Grant and Frank Sinatra) and official correspondence and documents including an invitation to her wedding, programs from important state occasions and gala events, handwritten speeches and scripts.

Martin was able to arrange an interview with Consul General Hon. Maguy Maccario Doyle and he inquired about the platinum disc for "True Love" which is in Monaco and was told that it was on display in the private residence in the Palace. Martin also sought further information about the wedding invitation list. Bing was #5 on the roster and as we know he did not attend but he did send a telegram tendering his regrets.

The exhibition had a film loop of home movies in "The Happy Home" section which included a two second snippet of Bing at the Palace with Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly's brother, Jack. Film clips were also shown as part of "The Hollywood Years" section. This featured an excerpt of the December 21st, 1954 Los Angeles premiere of *The Country Girl.* Bing was seen arriving with Mona Freeman at his side and with his pipe clenched in his mouth. The theater lobby was adorned with giant photos of the principals. Bing's was first and foremost. In addition, two trailers from *High Society* were in this loop, including the more familiar one with Ed Sullivan.

What was of most interest to readers of BING

magazine was the first page of a letter which Bing wrote to Grace on December 23, 1954. This is what he had to say.

Miss Grace Kelly
Apt. E 906
200 East 66th Street
New York, New York

Dear Grace:
Well, I finally got a chance to see "Country Girl" last night. They had a premiere here at the Warners Beverly Theatre, and it was quite an event. Certainly has to be for me to climb into a dinner coat and face that battery of photographers and TV cameras and radio spielers.

Everybody seemed to like the picture very well, and I include myself if I may be slightly immodest. Bill Perlberg gave a party later at Chasen's, and quite a few of the people came to the function and told me personally how much they liked it. Everyone was extravagant in his praise of your performance, and I certainly join them in that sentiment.

I thought I knew the story pretty well and what was going on, but I confess you completely had me under your spell. If I didn't know your background so well I would be prepared to swear that sometime or another you must have been married to just such a dreary bum as Frank Elgin. My dear girl, whoever beats you for the Oscar is going to have to do some intensive campaigning.

Bill's performance was absolutely perfect - so sustained and honest, and Anthony Ross surprised me. Of course I didn't see many of the scenes that he was in, as I only figured in a couple myself with him, so I wasn't familiar with just how much he had to do in the picture, but he got a substantial round of applause when he finished his last scene.

As for myself I couldn't tell whether I was any good or not - I was too busy watching myself as one does at such runnings to notice whether I was effective at all. Seemed to me I was doggin' it a little, but maybe I'll get away with it.

As an aside, Bing and Grace corresponded frequently and your editor has a handwritten letter from Grace to Bing. On headed notepaper for Grace P. Kelly, 988 Fifth Avenue, New York 21, this quick note must have been written on August 2, 1955.

Dear Bing,

Loved hearing from you – How I envy you your fishing trip – It must be absolute bliss.

Was in Hollywood for a week for fittings at Metro – am starting *The Swan* in Sept – but will come out around the fifteenth of August. Have rented a charming house on the hills off of sunset.

New York has been so hot that for the first time I am longing to be in California.

To Catch A Thief opens tonight in Philadelphia – Cary Grant & I will be there for all of the fuss.

Fondly,
Grace

Our thanks to Martin McQuade for undertaking this assignment on our behalf.

Once In A While (continued)

As we went to press we received the sad news of the loss of two other stars who worked with Bing.

Robert Goulet, died in a Los Angeles hospital while awaiting a lung transplant on October 30. He was 73. Robert Gerard Goulet was born on Nov. 26, 1933, in Lawrence, Mass. After minor roles in Canada, he auditioned for the role of 'Lancelot' in a new musical called 'Camelot'. The audition, in September 1960, went so well that everyone applauded, a rarity, The show's tryout in Toronto drew good notices. *Variety* called Goulet the "perfect Lancelot." Broadway critics, too, praised him, though most were at best lukewarm about the show, which also starred Julie Andrews and Richard Burton. But the public loved it. It ran for 873 performances, closing in January 1963. The cast album, featuring Goulet's hit song "If Ever I Would Leave You," topped the charts.

Robert Goulet's rise after "Camelot" was swift. In 1962, he won a Grammy award as best new artist for his first two albums, "Always You" and "Two of Us," and his hit single "What Kind of Fool Am I." Two years later, his album "My Love Forgive Me" went gold; 17 of his albums between 1962 and 1970 made the charts.

He reached the peak of his popularity in the '60s. In 1966, he starred in a television adaptation of "Brigadoon," which won an Emmy as outstanding musical production. He won a Tony for his performance in the 1968 Broadway musical "The Happy Time." And he appeared frequently on popular television programs like "The Ed Sullivan Show." It was in 1971 that he appeared on Bing's Christmas Show and sang "Do You Hear What I Hear" before joining in a musical playlet with Bing called "The Cop And The Anthem." He joined in the singing of "White Christmas" at the end of the show and he described the experience with these words, "He sang harmony! And it was like, 'Wow! Wow! Wow!'" Goulet was a keen golfer and played in Bing's Pro-Am at Pebble Beach on several occasions.

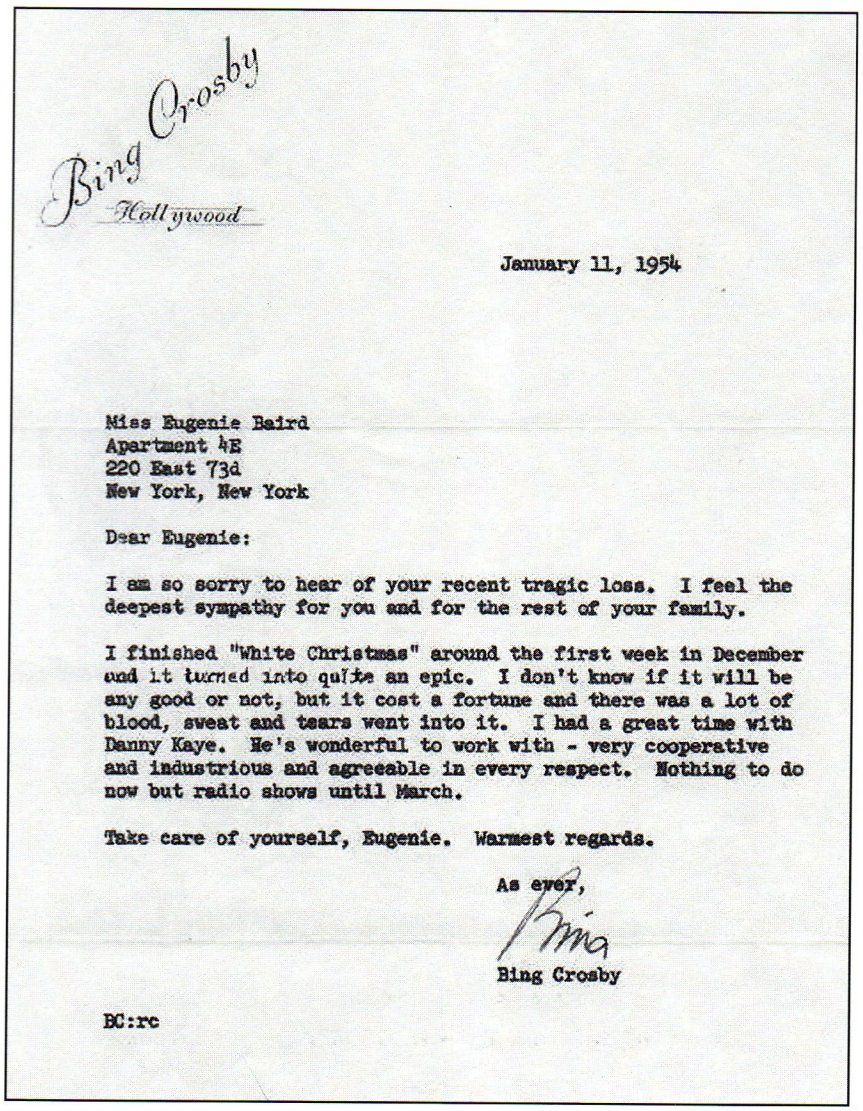
In 1982, Goulet was named Las Vegas entertainer of the year. His Las Vegas success led to roles parodying himself as the consummate lounge singer, a part he played in the movie "Atlantic City" (1980).

In the 1990s and beyond, Mr. Goulet continued to sing and act. He also took on novel assignments; in one, he provided the singing voice for Wheezy the Penguin in "Toy Story 2" (1999); in another, he played a mischievous office prankster in a commercial for Emerald Nuts, shown during this year's Super Bowl. He spoke widely about his recovery from prostate cancer to encourage men to be tested for the disease. But even with health problems, he could laugh at his own expense. When he had surgery on a split femur in the mid-1990s, he asked the surgeon if he would be able to dance afterward. The doctor said yes.

"That's good," Mr. Goulet said, "because I couldn't dance before."

Evelyn Knight a popular recording star in the 1940s and '50s, died on September 28 of lung cancer at a nursing home in San Jose. She was 89. Evelyn Knight was born Evelyn Davis in Washington, D.C. on December 31, 1917. She got her start as a singer on local radio, and soon found herself in the recording studio. It was during the mid forties that she had two useful chart hits on the Decca label. "Dance With A Dolly" and "Chickery Chick". In 1948, she really hit the big time when her recording of "A Little Bird Told Me" took off like a shot over the year end holidays. It rose quickly to the top of the pop charts and remained in the number one position in the country for seven weeks. Her next No. 1 record was "Powder Your Face With Sunshine" in 1949 and this was the year she recorded two songs with Bing "Everywhere You Go" and "How It Lies, How It Lies, How It Lies". She had also appeared on Bing's Philco show on January 14, 1948.

After appearing on network radio and television shows, she abruptly retired from show business before her 37th birthday, and never performed in public again.



Bing Crosby
Hollywood

January 11, 1954

Miss Eugenie Baird
Apartment 4E
220 East 73d
New York, New York

Dear Eugenie:

I am so sorry to hear of your recent tragic loss. I feel the deepest sympathy for you and for the rest of your family.

I finished "White Christmas" around the first week in December and it turned into quite an epic. I don't know if it will be any good or not, but it cost a fortune and there was a lot of blood, sweat and tears went into it. I had a great time with Danny Kaye. He's wonderful to work with - very cooperative and industrious and agreeable in every respect. Nothing to do now but radio shows until March.

Take care of yourself, Eugenie. Warmest regards.

As ever,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:rc

Designed & Printed by CITY-PRINTERS.COM, Ropery Lane, Co. Durham, DH3 3NJ, United Kingdom.
Tel:+44 (0)191 3883255 Email gary@city-printers.com